



NORWEGIAN
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Experiencing empowerment

A qualitative study of women in Caranavi, Bolivia

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Abstract

Empowering women and achieving gender equality is one of the most crucial concerns of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and the Sustainable Development Goals from 2015. From a political and human rights perspective, women's participation and women's rights are of paramount importance in order to realise the Millennium Development Goals. Empowerment is needed because of the presence of unequal power relations, and it includes the processes by which people who have been denied the ability to exercise agency, autonomy or choices, to gain such abilities.

The purpose of this thesis is to illuminate the term empowerment and look at how the women, who have participated in development aid projects, experience empowerment. This is a qualitative study, where I have used semi-structured interviews. The ten informants are participating in courses and women's groups initiated by the Norwegian Mission Alliance in Bolivia, Caranavi. This thesis will be taking a holistic approach defining women's empowerment as a process, whereby women's lives are transformed from a state where they have little or no power, to a position where they have an increased self-confidence to make their own decisions.

Prior studies indicate that empowerment play a central role in the development debate, however empowering others is not something an outside force can easily influence. This thesis aims to understand the empowerment process regarding how the women experience empowerment. In addition, the research examines whether empowerment is easily implemented and the effects of change in power-relations. The most central theory used in this thesis is Jo Rowlands theory of empowerment and gender analysis of power relations. My findings indicate that many of the informants experienced an increased ability to solve and improve their conditions. Furthermore, the informants shared of an increase in self-esteem, including improvements within their family relations and in their local society. This thesis will provide a first-hand knowledge and an understanding of how empowerment can be experienced.

Keywords: empowerment, women, gender, power relations, development, Bolivia

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List of abbreviations

CEDAW - Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

DAP - Development Aid Projects

EIGE - The European Institute for Gender Equality

HDR – Human Development Report

ILO - International Labour Organization

Law 348 – The Comprehensive Law to Guarantee Women a Free Life from Violence

MAN-B – Misión Alianza de Noruega en Bolivia / Norwegian Mission Alliance in Bolivia

MDG: Millennium Development Goals

NESH - The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities

NGO - Non-governmental Organisation

NMA – The Norwegian Mission Alliance

NOU – The Official Norwegian Report

NSD - Norwegian Social Science Data Services

REDMUCAB - Red de Mujeres en Caranavi y Alto Beni / Caranavi Alto Beni Women Network

SDG - Sustainable Development Goals

SIDA - The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UN - United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

WB - The World Bank

1 Introduction

I rise up my voice - not so I can shout
but so that those without a voice can be heard
we cannot succeed when half of us are held back.

- Malala Yousafzai (2014)¹

1.1 Background and motivation

This thesis will investigate the term empowerment in particular by looking at how a gender and empowerment analysis can be utilised by women. Though I have chosen to emphasise women's empowerment, I believe that this account holds much relevance to the empowerment of other disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Furthermore, I will explore various uses of the concept within the theoretical framework of women, gender, and development. The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the understanding of how the empowerment process is experienced by women participating in the Norwegian Mission Alliance in Bolivia (MAN-B) projects in Caranavi, Bolivia.

1.1.1 Personal motivation

My interest for Latin America started when living in Caracas, Venezuela, as an exchange student in 2006-2007 and later through international nursing practice in Guayaquil, Ecuador, in 2013. Latin American countries are often characterised by strong social and economic injustice and corruption. In my experience, the relations of power in the Latin American societies strongly favour the few while oppressing the majority. My motivation to write about women and empowerment developed as I started studying development and international aid, human rights, religion and social studies. This growing interest is also based on the experiences from travels to Latin America and in particular through watching the influence of the machismo culture in these countries.

One of the experiences that motivated me to investigate women's situation took place when I assisted an 18-year-old woman giving birth at a hospital in Guayaquil. I witnessed the difficulties she and other women in her situation could potentially face. The young woman came to the hospital alone and told me that the father of the child had left her. Moreover, she told me she did not have an education, work or income and that she was already alone with

¹ Pakistani activist for female education and Nobel Prize winner in 2014.

² Spanish for neighbourhood, but is often used for "a quarter of a town or city, especially one with a high

the responsibility of two young children. When I later visited families in the barrios² of Guayaquil, I met many women in the same situation, that were left alone taking care of their children with lack of education and little income. Few of the fathers of these children stayed to take responsibility for their families.

I believe this is one of many examples of cultivation of the male and female structures that are still strongly held in many societies today, particularly in Latin America. The prosperities of these women in Guayaquil, being destined to take care of children in unsafe conditions, with lack of resources, raised many questions and an urge to find lasting solutions to help these women. Though there are many aspects to take into consideration on this matter, I found one concept to be of particular interest to me: the idea of giving women tools that would give them increased control of their own lives.

1.1.2 Political relevance

Women's empowerment plays a central role in the development debate. Empowering women is one of the most crucial concerns of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which is enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Millennium Declaration. From a political and human rights perspective, women's participation and women's rights are of paramount importance in order to realise the MDGs vision for the future of the world. Both according to the MDGs and the Norwegian Government's international development policy, women and empowerment, together with women's rights and gender equality, are among the most important priorities of international development aid.

In the UN's SDG, goal no. 5 is to: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (UN, 2017a). It is further stated that "while the world has achieved progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment under the MDGs (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys) women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world" (ibid). Further it is put forth that: "gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world" (ibid). In order to reach these goals, women and girls must receive equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and

² Spanish for neighbourhood, but is often used for "a quarter of a town or city, especially one with a high poverty level" (Oxford dictionary, 2017a).

economic decision-making processes. As a result, this will “fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large” (UN, 2017a).

Report no. 11 from the Norwegian Parliament Stortinget: “On Equal Terms: Women’s Rights and Gender Equality” (2007), addresses the importance of acknowledging that the MDGs on poverty eradication cannot be achieved unless women are put centre stage. In the report, the focus on women’s rights and gender equality is also criticised, because it has not been given the necessary priority over time. According to the Universal Declaration Human Rights (UDHR), advocating women’s rights is an obligation and the efforts to promote them need to be intensified. At the same time, it is important to underline that even though the focus is on women, the policy must also mobilise boys and men. Former prime minister of Norway, Jens Stoltenberg, also states the importance of empowering women:

My main message today, however, is that the greatest gains countries achieve, economically, as well as politically, come with empowering women, ensuring equal opportunity and health care, and increasing the ratio of women’s active participation in working life (Stoltenberg, 2006).

In other words, gender equality and women’s empowerment are fundamental dimensions of human development. Just like Nobel Prize Winner Malala put forth in the beginning of this chapter: “we cannot have success, when half of us are held back”. For human development to be universal, it cannot lack half of humanity. To have equal progress in human development, both men and women have to be involved. This is a simple but powerful truth, which is often forgotten in the preoccupation with average human progress. Gender gaps still exist in capabilities as well as opportunities. As the 2016 Global Gender Gap Report indicates: “progress is still too slow for realizing the full potential of half of humanity within our lifetimes” (United Nations Development Programme, 2016:165).

1.1.3 Academic interest

The academic value of this research centralises around the exercise of power in societies. My contribution is mainly an understanding of power-relations that already exist by providing first-hand knowledge through interviews. The term empowerment is undoubtedly connected to the word power. According to the Cambridge Dictionary empowerment is “the process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you” (2017a).

The Oxford Dictionary, on the other hand defines the word as “the authority or power given to someone to do something” (2017b) or more specifically, “the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one’s life and claiming one’s rights” (ibid). In other words, it is difficult to discuss the term “empowerment” without scrutinising the word power. Additionally, the Official Norwegian Report (NOU) emphasise that empowerment is linked to power:

Empowerment is about power and the lack of power seen from a perspective where the lack of power is not only an individual problem; rather it is a social, economic and cultural problem. Empowerment is to strengthen the individual or the groups of individuals to both change and affect inexpedient conditions. The goal is that the persons can control their lives more efficiently towards their personal needs and aims. Empowerment is closely linked to liberation (The Official Norwegian Report, 1998-18:274).³

Power-relations are essential in the discussion of the empowerment process, because when empowerment of women increases, they also have an increased ability to develop, on an individual level, an economic level and consequently on a collective level. The most relevant topics examine whether empowerment is easily implemented and the effects of change in power-relations, for instance increased self-esteem or economic prosperities. There are several theories which explore how power affects society and for this reason I will provide a brief presentation of some of the most central theories of power relations in chapter three.

1.2 Research design

My field of research, similar to this master in “religion, society and global issues” is interdisciplinary and combines social studies, development and gender study. The thesis explores how women experience empowerment in development aid projects (DAP), and the research is based on semi-structured interviews with ten women that have been involved in MAN-B’s projects in the Caranavi districts. The interviews were conducted in Bolivia, April to May 2017. The thesis has an empirical focus mainly drawn to the study and analysis of the interviews. The interviews provide an insight into how the women experienced the empowerment process, through the projects and coursework given by the MAN-B. The employment of this method requires the researcher to be careful and considerate when it comes to the informants in the research. A more thorough review of the methods applied and the data gathering process will be given in chapter four.

³ This reference and following references in Norwegian are translated by me.

1.3 Presentation of research question

With this thesis I hope to provide a contribution that will take us one step closer to understanding how the empowerment process can be experienced for women that participate in DAP. On the academic field, this study will contribute with examples of the changes in already existing power-relations, including the effects of projects that focus on women's empowerment processes and whether these projects can be a way out of both poverty and gender inequality. To get first-hand knowledge on this matter, I have interviewed ten women from Bolivia that have participated in projects from MAN-B. My research question is:

How do the women participating in MAN-B's projects in Caranavi, Bolivia, experience empowerment?

My intention is to gain knowledge regarding how the women experience empowerment and how they feel that the coursework from MAN-B has influenced their lives. More specifically, I wish to understand how the courses affects their view of themselves and whether they have experienced that this has resulted in some changes in their personal life, within their own family and in their local society. Furthermore, I will investigate whether they believe it has opened doors to new activities outside their homes.

My field of interest is whether the projects have given any positive changes in the way the informants look at themselves and their role as women. I will emphasise the women's own experiences in terms of self-confidence, which is an aspect of empowerment that can result in women having increased power. What are the roles of men and women in the local community? How is work and tasks shared between them? What is the power balance in the family? Do the women feel more confident? Do they dare to speak up in public? Moreover, I will question whether the women feel that their situation is different as a result of the women's projects they have participated in, and whether their own experiences and self-evaluation are important indicators of their situation. I believe that conducting the fieldwork in Bolivia has provided me with valuable material and information that I cannot access in Norway or through other available sources.

1.4 Conceptual clarifications and definitions

There are a number of different definitions of empowerment. The term has undoubtedly become a buzzword, and is frequently and widely both used and abused (Batliwala, 2007). There are many elaborate definitions of empowerment, but Kabeer captures the core meaning quite well: “Empowerment refers to the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them” (Kabeer, 1999:437). Furthermore, she underlines the difference between having power and being empowered. Kabeer claims that people who were always “presented with a range of choices may be powerful, but they are not empowered because they were never denied that choice to begin with” (ibid). To define a word such as empowerment is undoubtedly a challenge that demands a discussion in itself. However, my primary focus has been to find a definition of empowerment that is useful for this specific research, with Appleby’s perspective in mind:

When stating definitions it is crucial to see them as approximate guides to reality, and not as definitive terms. The danger of using finished definitions is that they threaten to overlook the great diversity within the different terms (Appleby, 2000:15).

My main objective is to analyse women’s experiences of the empowerment process. In this context, empowerment will be presented as an integrated part of the poverty reduction in the world, both as an ideology and as a method. When I refer to empowerment, I will emphasise women’s empowerment process, meaning that empowerment is an attempt to “strengthening women’s ability to solve their own problems, through giving them a stronger role in the society” (Vilby, 2006:234). Furthermore, the Norwegian Mission Alliance (NMA) shares the understanding of empowerment as a process. Their definition is inspired by the World Bank (WB), which defines empowerment as the following:

Empowerment is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions that both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets (The World Bank, 2017).

Understanding empowerment as a process involves understanding that the work does not have a limited time-schedule, like other projects might have. Furthermore, regarding it as a process highlights how important changes can develop with the participants underway and with a greater probability of establishing lasting changes. Since the local society is

considered the most important arena to win control over conditions and affect the community, I will also examine how empowerment can increase the capacity of individuals and groups so “they can make purposeful choices and their capacity can transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes” (Narayan-Parker, 2005:40).

1.5 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is organised as follows: the first chapter involves the introduction and presents the background, motivation and interest for the topic, including the research design, followed with presentation of the research question and conceptual clarifications. The second chapter intends to explore the background by presenting NMA, and in particular the work done by MAN-B in Caranavi, to enable the reader unfamiliar to Bolivia to envision the lives and conditions of the women participating in the projects. Chapter three is a literature review and outlines the theoretical framework for this thesis, including a wider presentation of empowerment theories. Chapter four presents the methods used in this thesis, while the analysis and findings from the interviews will be found in chapter five. The most central findings from the analysis will be further discussed in chapter six. Finally, I present my conclusions and final thoughts in chapter seven.

2 Background

In order to understand the complexity of this thesis it is important to have some background information of both Bolivia and the NMA. I will start with a brief presentation of Bolivia that highlights topics that are relevant to this research. This will enable the reader that is unfamiliar with the country to get a picture of how the lives and conditions of the women can be. Furthermore, I will look at how the NMA work with challenges related to gender inequality, and present the projects of MAN-B in Caranavi. At last, there will be given a brief presentation of gender equality and empowerment in the MDGs.

2.1 Bolivia

Bolivia is a country with great geographical and cultural variation, both in the sense of landscape and within the multi-ethnic population. Bolivia is a nation that has the largest proportion of indigenous people, who make up around two-thirds of the population (BBC, 2012). The indigenous communities have undergone centuries of both discrimination and marginalisation that have forced them to give up their lands and work for others, and in general left them degraded to the status of “second-class” citizens (Hensley, 2011).

Evo Morales became Bolivia’s first indigenous president in 2006 and for the last 11 years the country has witnessed various judicial changes. In the beginning of 2009, the Morales government created a new constitution that granted increased rights for women, as well as benefitting the indigenous people, which was viewed as a constitutional milestone in Bolivia. The recent statistical data from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) states that Bolivia is “a resource rich country attributed to captive markets for natural gas exports to Brazil and Argentina” (CIA, 2016:95). However, it is considered one of the poorest and least developed countries in Latin America, where 38,6% of its population is currently living below the national poverty line⁴ (ibid).

The Bolivian legal system guarantees rights such as gender parity norms for election to Congress; freedom of violence; protection during pregnancy; equal pay for equal work; protection from employment discrimination for reasons of pregnancy, civil status, age, or physical traits; reproductive and sexual rights; and equal access to land ownership. However, social norms can limit the effect of laws to the detriment of gender equality. Extensive

⁴ The national poverty rate is based on per cent of population living on less than the international standard of 2\$ per day.

literature has demonstrated that social norms are particularly binding where an increase in women's agency would threaten the balance of power in the household, including women's political participation (The World Bank, 2012).

2.1.1 Situation report: women in Bolivia

Although the new constitution of Bolivia guarantees equal rights for both genders, Bolivian women still face struggles and discrimination in several aspects of their lives. According to the Human Development Report (HDR) on Gender in Bolivia, men are treated better than women:

Men receive more and better education than women, receive increased and better health assistance than women, and have the possibility to generate income while working less [...] if we consider that women, as opposed to men, also have [...] the almost exclusive responsibility for domestic work (HDR 2003, cited in Unicef, 2003:1).

Similar to many Latin American countries, Bolivian women are expected to be a part of a typical gender role that can be described as a “wife-mother-maintainer” of the home. It is common for them to carry the main responsibility for domestic work, in addition to ensuring the welfare of their children.

In all countries and throughout the history, women have traditionally been marginalised both in the internal party power structures, and places in parliaments. In 2016, women occupied only 22 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide. That is not the case for Bolivia, which is one of only two countries in the world where women are a majority in political representation (Green, 2016:121). Bolivia also had their first female President in 1980, Lydia Gueiler Tjeada (Walter, 2001:15). According to Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) reports from 2015, Bolivia was the second country in the world in terms of political participation of women, and the first in Latin America, with women making up 49 per cent of representatives in legislative bodies (CEDAW reports of Bolivia, 2015).

2.1.2 Gender-based violence

Despite the few milestones in Bolivia related to gender equality, violence against women remains a serious problem in the country (Bott et al., 2012). Many women suffer from

domestic violence as a consequence of the machismo⁵ culture and have few ambitions for their future. “Given the widespread prevalence of violence against women and children, its significant health and economic consequences, as well as its violation of many basic human rights” (UN, 2015). The UN’s Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) establishes in Recommendation no. 19 that: “Gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women’s ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men” (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017).

However, a greater pressure to address the issue of domestic and political violence has been materialised, and in 2013 the government passed Law 348: “The Comprehensive Law to Guarantee Women a Life Free from Violence”. In the interviews the women frequently referred to this law and many stated how this law was crucial to end gender violence.

The Law 348 to guarantee women a right to life free of violence, prohibited reconciliation in the context of violence against women, and it also prohibited those receiving the complaint or dealing with the complaint to promote reconciliation. The law further stated that security measures must be put in place to ensure physical, psychological and sexual safety of the victim (CEDAW Reports of Bolivia, 2015).

According to the CEDAW Reports of Bolivia (2015) gender-based discrimination was prohibited by the Constitution, whilst femicide⁶ was criminalised and sanctioned with 30 years’ imprisonment. According to Bott et al. (2012) the percentage of women who reported physical violence by an intimate partner *ever*, was 52.3 % of women in Bolivia in 2003.

2.2 The Norwegian Mission Alliance

The NMA is an “evangelical, diaconal mission organization that is engaged in an extensive work to support poor, disabled and marginalized people in Asia, South America and Africa” (NMA, 2017).

2.2.1 Description of NMA

The NMA describes of their goal as follows: “[to] give people the opportunity to develop their abilities and resources, and support them in taking responsibility for their own lives, the

⁵ Machismo is defined as “male behaviour that is strong and forceful, and shows very traditional ideas about how men and women should behave” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017b).

⁶ Femicide is “the killing of a woman or girl, in particular by a man and in account of her gender” (Oxford Dictionary, 2017a).

lives of their families and the development of their own local communities” (NMA, 2017). The work of the NMA includes: “community development with components like education, healthcare, income-generating activities and livelihood” (ibid). Furthermore, they work together with local authorities, organisations and communities to ensure that the target groups participate and have ownership over the projects. Wherever possible, the NMA cooperates with national evangelical churches and local congregations.

2.2.2 The NMA’s focus on gender equality

According to the NMA Strategy Document (2010-2015), point 5.4.2 concerning gender, a great gap between female and male rights and opportunities remains. Through the perspective of gender, the NMA aims is to ensure that both men and women have access to, and control over resources and equal opportunities. This includes both basic needs like access to an economic income, health service, education, infrastructure and technology, as well as strategic needs like control over resources and a fair chance to participate and influence political processes.

Poverty and inequality are closely linked, and since discrimination often affects girls and women, the NMA’s efforts are to ensure that women and girls are empowered and to strengthen their position in society. However, the NMA emphasise that this should never be interpreted in a way that does not ensure participation of both men and women. In many of the areas that the NMA work with, women’s participation in equality initiatives tends to be dominating, and involving men can be a challenge. The gender perspective can help to understand how men and women have different roles and positions that affect each other, and also how they depend on one another. When women’s position and role changes it affects men as well, which is the reason why it is important to engage both men and women. NMA’s overall goal is to combat poverty and change the target groups living conditions, however while the living conditions might be improved for one group, this improvement can have the opposite effect for another group. Therefore, it is of eminent importance to include both genders (NMA Strategy Document, 2010).

2.2.3 The Norwegian Mission Alliance in Bolivia

MAN-B, which was founded in 1978, was formally recognised by the Bolivian State in 1980, and is supported through a bilateral channel from the NMA. The Strategy Plan states that: “it is a Mission that facilitates development together with local grassroots organizations and civil

society organizations” (Strategy Plan MAN-B 2013-2017 in Leer-Helgesen, 2016:123).

MAN-B was first established as a Norwegian organisation led by Norwegian missionaries. In 1997 MAN-B became a Bolivian NGO with national leaders (ibid). Furthermore, MAN-B has developed different initiatives for the last three decades in several regions of Bolivia. In the mid 90’s, it started a wide development program in the Yungas Amazon, Province of Caranavi, through resources from the Alcoche Regional Development Contract that was executed in two major stages, between 1995 and 2010 (MAN-B, 2010).

The MAN-B is a non-profit non-governmental organisation (NGO) that promotes comprehensive development of postponed social groups and seeks to promote the integral development of marginalised groups. MAN-B is defined as a diaconal mission organisation, where the concept of diakonia plays a central role (MAN-B, 2010). At the time of my fieldwork, MAN-B worked in three geographical areas in Bolivia: in the city of El Alto, the lowlands around Caranavi and in Luribay. While El Alto is a city of immigrants from the countryside with more than a million inhabitants, Caranavi consists of rural communities. In these projects’ areas, the majority belongs to the indigenous group Aymara.

In Caranavi, there is a process of consolidating organisations to work together. Typically, important projects in this area are coffee production, fruit associations and REDMUCAB (The Caranavi and Alto Beni Women Network). A project report from 2016, which was written to evaluate this initiative, stated that these projects promoted more competitive products, better handling, and improved cycles of production. Also mentioned in the report was that micro-enterprises, especially in handcrafts, will probably make these organisations survive in the future. In addition, the report emphasises that since: “the projects have social, economic, and productive character, all activities, are conducted observing the need of the families and respecting and valuing local knowledge” (NMA Project Report, 2016:14). The report also adds “commitment to constant participation during the implementation of each of the projects is important” (ibid).

MAN-B has worked to build and strengthen a network for women in Caranavi through REDMUCAB to make them nationally acknowledged. There has been an increased participation in different types of demonstrations, particularly marching against violence. Through REDMUCAB, three women’s groups have also been established, where the women have been trained to project development in their municipalities. In this way they

are more strengthened for participation in their own society and can therefore take better part in important decisions where they live.

2.3 Gender equality and empowerment in the MDGs

To assess the development challenges of Bolivia, it is important to consider gender relations and the situation of women. Although the country has achieved some progress towards gender equality in the past decade, women still fall behind men in important dimensions of well-being. However, outcomes for women continue to be reduced compared to men. To name a few: more women than men are illiterate and violence against women is among the highest in the region (The World Bank, 2015).

Gender equality is one of the UN MDGs, but women's rights are also closely connected to all of the other MDGs. Women's empowerment, appearing as the third of the eight MDGs, is a goal that also constitutes a means to achieve other MDGs (UN, 2015). For instance, women's empowerment is crucial in efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger (MDG #1), achieve universal primary education (MDG #2), reduce child mortality (MDG #4), improve maternal health (MDG #5) and combating HIV/AIDS (MDG #6). The indicators include ensuring improvements in the following four areas:

- Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary school
- Female adult literacy rates
- Ratio of women to men in non-agricultural employment
- Ratio of women to men in government (parliament etc.) (UNDP, 2010).

Gender inequalities prevail in every sphere of life, which underlines the relevance of women's empowerment in order for any society to develop. This is one of the reasons why women's empowerment is an important element of both the MDG and the World Bank. During a UN summit on the MDGs in New York in 2010, the importance of women's participation and empowerment was highlighted as essential for achieving the MDGs. Its core argument was that progress toward the aim requires two ingredients that are missing in the current MDG framework: a human rights-based approach, and support for women's organisations to advocate for it (Ambe & Fenda, 2012). The politics of agenda setting prioritised a narrow set of issues within particular themes such as poverty alleviation and women's empowerment.

However, themes such as inequality and sustainability were absent altogether in the summit of the MDGs. The next subchapter will explain why gender equality matters.

2.3.1 Why equality matters

Gender refers to socially constructed categories of femininity and masculinity, as opposed to the biological differences between women and men. Gender relations are therefore the socially constructed relations between women and men (Hopper, 2012:93). Hopper further describes how this exclusion has affected women:

The state institutions, political systems and legislatures of most countries remain patriarchal or male-dominated. It has led to the exclusion of women from political power, denied them access to important economic resources, and made it difficult to bring about policy change on issues ranging from gender-based violence to wage inequalities (Hopper, 2012:95).

Adcock underlines that “the key to realization of gender equality is one of the most difficult pieces to the development puzzle” (Adcock, 2013:115). Regardless of where you live, gender equality is a fundamental human right. Similar, the UN highlights that “gender equality is intrinsically linked to sustainable development and is vital to the realization of human rights for all” (United Nations Population Fund, 2005). Advancing gender equality is crucial to all areas of a healthy society, from reducing poverty to promoting the health, education, protection and well-being of girls and boys. According to Article 1 in the Human Rights Declaration, the ideal is that no matter if you are born male or female, there should be no obstacles because what matters is that you are human. The human rights are for *all humans*. Despite this, women all over the world are worse off than men on most areas of society. Nussbaum emphasises how gender inequality is still a great challenge:

Women in much of the world lack support for fundamental functions of a human life. They are less well nourished than men, less healthy, more vulnerable to physical violence and sexual abuse. They are much less likely than men to be literate, and still less likely to have pre-professional or technical education. Should they attempt to enter the workplace, they face greater obstacles, including intimidation from family or spouse, sex discrimination in hiring, and sexual harassment in the workplace – all, frequently, without effective legal recourse (Nussbaum, 2000:1).

This is the reason why women and human rights became an important topic and led to UN’s establishment of a new commission with special focus on women’s position and to promote their rights. Their aim has been to highlight the areas where men and women continue to be

treated equal. The Women's Convention, Article 5 states that State Parties shall take all appropriate measures:

To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women (UN Women, 2003).

Gender inequality is especially persistent within households since the dual role of many women, as low-income earners and unpaid mothers, places an enormous burden upon them. However, increased female participation in the economy may also have a downside. Having gained a greater role as participators in the market economy, this cannot disguise the fact that for many women it has resulted in an increased workload (Hopper, 2012). It is also important to note that gender equality and women's empowerment do not mean that men and women become the same, "only that access to opportunities and life changes is neither dependent on, nor constrained by, their sex" (United Nations Population Fund, 2005).

2.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter has provided background information in order to get a wider picture of this research. A broader description of empowerment theories will be examined in the next chapter. My main hypothesis is that the empowerment of women in a society is imperative in a development process that will cause repercussion on micro levels.

3 Theoretical perspectives

In this chapter I will account for central definitions and theoretical perspectives of this thesis. The chapter is divided in four parts. First, I will look at theories of empowerment as a source to development. Second, I will present some of the most central perspectives of power. Third, Rowlands' feminist model of power will be presented. I find her theory best fit for this study since she focus on empowerment as "processes that lead people to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and have influence" (Rowlands, 1997:87). And last, I will look at women and empowerment, with particular focus on the empowerment process.

3.1 Empowerment as a source to development

Empowerment is a key means to achieving sustainable development and other vital goals. But it also has a value in and of itself. -Ban Ki-moon, formerly Secretary-General of UN (2012).

Since this thesis will use interviews with women in Bolivia that are receiving aid from a Norwegian non-profit NGO as primary sources, is it interesting to scrutinise why empowerment is often perceived as so important for development agencies, and to pick up on some relevant challenges these agencies may encounter.

3.1.1 Empowerment and poverty

Approximately 1.2 billion people in the world live in extreme poverty, which is defined as less than one dollar per day (WHO, 2017). Empowerment was highlighted as one of the primary forces for poverty reduction by the WB's empowerment sourcebook (2002) written by Deepa Narayan-Parker. Narayan-Parker defines empowerment in relation to the combat of poverty as "the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives" (Narayan-Parker, 2002:11).

The role of empowerment in 'the elimination of poverty' has been widely examined. Narayan-Parker highlights that "there has been a considerable study of the role of empowerment-related factors in poverty reduction and overall development" (Narayan-Parker, 2005:39). According to the World Development Report (2001) from the WB it was proposed that empowerment is one of three 'critical pillars' of poverty reduction. During the past few years there has been a growing attention on how to evaluate the importance of empowerment in poverty reduction and development. In order to understand the processes

needed to combat poverty, it is essential to understand what poverty is. Poverty is also a very complex matter. The Norwegian Storting presents a brief explanation of world poverty in a report from 2008-2009:

World poverty is no coincidence. It is a result of international power structures. Of poor policies and poor leadership. Of historical trends and conflicts. Of oppression and discrimination. Although the world's rich and poor are becoming increasingly intertwined in a complex global economy, the goods remain unevenly distributed. The disparity between those who have most and those who have least has never been greater (Report no.13 to the Norwegian Storting, 2008:9).

Broadly described, empowerment refers to the expansion of freedom of choice and action. Narayan-Parker states that “a growing body of evidence points to the linkages between empowerment and development effectiveness both at the society-wide level and the grassroots level” (Narayan-Parker, 2002:17). Empowerment is recognised as a promising source, as well as more effective, which has led to an increased interest in evaluation, particularly within the development field. It is seen particularly as a means of increasing the capacity of poor people and subordinate groups to influence development processes.

Especially for poor people, this freedom is curtailed by both their lack of voice and power in relation to the state. Narayan-Parker argues that “empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives” (Narayan-Parker, 2002:14). She further describes poverty as multidimensional, since poor people are in need of a range of assets and capabilities at the individual level, which for instance involves health, housing and education. Furthermore, it is necessary for poor people to have assets at the collective level, whereby Narayan-Parker refers to the ability to organise and mobilise in order to take collective action to solve their problems (ibid).

Narayan-Parker also argues that there is a logical link between poverty and disempowerment because if “a person's basic needs are not fulfilled then he/she cannot make any meaningful choices in his/her life” (Narayan-Parker, 2005:39). The empowerment of poor men and women requires the removal of formal and informal institutional barriers that might prevent them from taking action and help to improve their wellbeing, both individually and collectively. Since the beginning of the 1990's, a growing number of development projects have, for that reason, featured components that seek to directly empower poorer groups. The

aims of these projects have, for instance, been to combat corruption and improve the functioning of public services, in addition to developing more open and inclusive governing structures. The specific empowerment interventions involve different actions to: “promote participation, increase transparency, build capacity among poor groups and strengthen accountability mechanisms in development processes” (Narayan-Parker, 2002:40).

3.1.2 Active participation in the decision-making process

In many development programs, the aim is to support empowerment of people both individually and collectively, “and to encourage to participation, decision-making and to increase control and have access to resources” (Oxaal & Baden, 1997:6). McWhirter makes a distinction between different situations of empowerment and illustrates four stages in his definition of empowerment:

The process by which people, organizations or groups who are powerless become [1] aware of power dynamics at work in their life context, [2] develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, [3] exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others [4] and support the empowerment of others in the community (McWhirter 1991 in Rowlands, 1995:103).

McWhirter’s first point is to develop an understanding, which entails that when you understand your own situation, you are more likely to act to do something about it. It is also important to act together collectively, since McWhirter’s definition makes clear that taking action is not about gaining the power to dominate others (Rowlands, 1995).

This empowerment theory is an example of the importance of bringing people outside the decision-making process into it. This understanding of empowerment puts a strong emphasis on “participation in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making” (Rowlands, 1997:13). Levi argues that it may as well be important to unify strength to break the barriers of gender inequality: “Unionization and mobilization are crucial prerequisites of empowerment. But it is also essential to the transformations of institutions that make it difficult to use voice” (Levi, 2010:86).

However, increased participation in decision-making processes is not only on the individual level or groups. Bachrach and Baratz also focused on empowerment and participation. In

particular they were concerned with the effects of enhancing the power of the poor, as well as with the obstacles erected by institutions and elites. In their investigation of several important decisions in two different periods, they found that “distributions of outcomes occurred one key decisions... were initiated and shaped by the exercise of power on the part of those who had been previously excluded from the political system” (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970:103). They developed the concept of *non-decision*, which they define as “a decision that results in suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values or interest for the decision-maker” (Bachrach & Baratz, 1979:43-44). Their core argument is that power entails not simply interaction, but also limitations on interaction. Yet, their formulation is also ambiguous. They explicitly state that “power involved actual compliance and it cannot be possessed, only exercised” (Bachrach & Baratz, 1979:19). This view is not far away from Foucault’s view on power that will be presented in chapter 3.2. Before introducing their theories I will give an idea of how empowerment works.

3.1.3 How does empowerment work?

The idea of empowerment is increasingly used as a tool for understanding what is needed to change the situation of poor and marginalized people. In this context, there is a broad agreement that empowerment is a process that involves some degree of personal development, but that this is not sufficient; and that it involves moving from insight to action (Rowlands, 1995:103).

Though it can be easy for social workers and development agencies to claim that they know what is best and how the people they help should think or act, this can create a *power-over*⁷ relationship that might not lead to a lasting empowerment process. This is undoubtedly a relevant perspective for development agencies. How should development agencies implement their policies to get the best empowerment results? Or to put it simply: how does empowerment work? Can outsiders give empowerment? Rowlands appears to disagree:

In practice, much empowerment work involves forms of group work. The role of the outside professional in this context becomes one of helper and facilitator; anything more directive is seen as interfering with the empowerment of the people concerned. The outside professional cannot expect to control the outcomes authentic to empowerment (Rowlands, 1997:16).

The same point is mentioned by Askheim and Starrin who refer to the different opinions of

⁷ The power dimensions will be presented further in chapter 3.3.

whether one person can 'empower' another. According to them, a social worker might contribute to organise for the client to have power over their own life (Askheim & Starrin, 2008). This is again supported by Rowlands who points out that "true power cannot be bestowed: it comes from within" (Rowlands, 1997:17). Furthermore, any notion of empowerment being "given" by one group to another hides attempts at keeping control. Outside professionals should therefore be clear that any *power over* which they have in relation to the people they work with, is likely to be challenged. It is pivotal that any DAP never take the credit for "empowering" a woman (*power over*), as empowerment must come from within the individual (*power from within*).

3.2 Perspectives on power

I will present three original and important theories on power. By doing so, we are able to get a better understanding of how the power-relationship dynamic changes (if it does). "Power", which is actually in the word itself, is central to the term empowerment. Power is of central concern for political scientists and sociologists because it appears both as means and ends in politics. For this reason, this study will also have a particular focus on power. Gita Sen argues that, "empowerment, is first and foremost about power; changing power relations in favour of those who previously exercised little power over their lives" (Sen, 1997:2).

3.2.1 Weber

There are a numerous definitions of power and perhaps most frequently cited is the definition given by Max Weber, one of sociology's founding figures: "Power [Macht] is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (Weber, 1947:152). Weber also provides a more general definition of power: "the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a command action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action" (Weber, 1968:962).

To Weber, power is about making independent choices and taking control, even when others do not want you to. According to Uphoff, Weber's focus is on the ability to "achieve objectives despite resistance is at the core of the concept "power" whether used formally or informally" (Uphoff, 1989:299). Uphoff further argues that the two terms in Weber's

definition, “probability” and “basis” should be highlighted because they are crucial for making the concept less vague. Uphoff states that Weber’s first term addresses whether or not power exists as something in its own right. Various leading writers have considered Weber’s definition of power as a conceptual advance to affirm that power is not a thing but rather a relationship. This is confirmed by Weber himself: “power is only a statement about a relationship, or in other words about a probability, not a certainty, someone will be able to achieve his objective” (Weber, 1947:52).

3.2.2 Lukes

The sociologist Steven Lukes has proposed an alternative view of power. He sets out his own idea of how the most effective forms of power operate, and he claims that: “those who hold power within the system will be accepted by the people, due to the people’s belief in the system” (Lukes, 1974:23). He defines it as “three dimensions of power”. Lukes asserts that this form of power “to operate effectively, requires an acceptance of the status quo because of an accepted underlying ideology” (Lukes, 1974:23). Furthermore, Lukes calls his three-dimensional view the “supreme and most insidious exercise of power” as it allows rulers to shape the preferences and perception of the masses as well as prevent them from having grievances (ibid).

The first dimension⁸ regards power in terms of the ability to make decisions to go one’s own way in observable conflicts. A second dimension⁹ of power concerns the ability to control what issues are decided upon. By this, Lukes means that groups or individuals with power can exercise it, not by making a decision, but by limiting the alternatives available to others. Lukes argues that there is also a third dimension of power, which he calls the “manipulation of desires”. He questions: “Is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have – that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires?” (Lukes, 1974:23). He points out that this does not necessarily mean brainwashing, but that our desires can be manipulated in more subtle ways. Lukes is able to present a wider definition of that than offered by Weber. For Lukes, the question concerns the definition of power, pedagogically described in a formula: “A exercises power over B, when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests”. This still leaves the question;

⁸ Originally a theory put forward by Robert Dahl in his 1957-article, “The Concept of Power”.

⁹ Originally a power-theory proposed by Bachrach and Baratz in their 1962-article, “Two Faces of Power”, as an elaboration to Dahl’s theory.

how do we know what B's interests are? Lukes admits that this is ultimately a matter of opinion. Nevertheless, Giddens and Griffiths point out: "Still, his conception of power has been influential in alerting sociologists to the different dimensions that the exercise of power involves" (Giddens and Griffiths, 2006:846).

For Lukes power is correlated with agency. He writes: "power refers to an ability or capacity of an agent or agents, which they may or may not exercise" (Lukes, 1974:63). Further, he defines power "in terms of agents' abilities to bring about significant effects, specifically by furthering their own interests and/or affecting the interests of others, whether positively or negatively" (Lukes, 1974:65). Furthermore, he argues:

The trouble seems to be that both Bachrach and Baratz [originally the second dimension] and the pluralists suppose that because power, as they conceptualize it, only shows up in cases of actual conflict, it follows that actual conflict is necessary to power [the second dimension]. But this is to ignore the crucial point that the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent such conflict from rising in the first place [the third dimension] (Lukes, 2004:27).

Both Lukes' second and third dimension are important for this thesis. "Actual conflict is necessary to power" (Lukes, 2004:27) is linked to the second dimension. For the women to achieve a gender equality process it is necessary – according to this theory – to challenge the already established power relationship. The women have not only to question a power relationship that is in disfavour, but they also need to object or protest against it.

Regarding Lukes third dimension it is important for these women to gain knowledge on how power works – as Lukes mentions in the quote above, the most effective use of power is when it prevents conflict (such as the second dimension) to take place. In other words, it is a power relationship that does not get challenged – it might be that the women, in this case, do not even know that it happens. A classic example is the typical historical and cultural stereotypical gender roles that nearly go on as a "routine". This is the case of many women in Bolivia, where many silently accept their roles, which according to Lukes is a very effective use of power. Furthermore, Lukes states, "this is to ignore the crucial point that the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent such conflict from rising in the first place" (Lukes, 2004:27). Lukes does not necessarily mean that the second dimension is wrong, but rather that the third dimension is more effective, by having the ability to correct the current balance of power.

When talking of injustice of powerlessness and any attendant inequalities, Lukes argues that there are always people who are in a position to act. He writes: “the powerful will include those who both contribute to and are in position to reduce or remedy others powerlessness. Where it is feasible, we encounter structural limits to power” (Lukes, 2004:68).

3.2.3 Foucault

The French sociologist Michel Foucault also developed a highly influential theory of power, which is far from Weber’s more explicit definition. Foucault argues that power is not concentrated in one institution, such as the state, or held by any group of individuals. He argues that these views are outdated models of power, such as Lukes’s theory, which relied on fixed identities. This means that power is held by groups that are easily identifiable, such as; the ruling class for Marxists; or men for feminists (Giddens and Griffiths, 2006).

For Foucault, the exercise of power is to guide the possibility of conduct and influence the outcome. Foucault states that: “to govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of actions of others” (Foucault, 1982:790). Furthermore, Foucault describes power not as a finite entity that can be located, nor a substance of which people can possess more or less, power is rather relational and exists only in its exercise. It is constituted in a network of social relationship among subjects who are, to at least a minimal extent, free to act. He sees power as a “mode of action upon actions”. Power is seen as productive and intimately bound to knowledge. Foucault’s model includes an understanding of resistance as a form of power. His focus is mainly on micro-politics: the local exercise of power at particular points, and the resistance to it. Foucault does not allow for the internal processes, which can interfere with the individual’s agency and choice. Moreover, he appears to accept any relationship where the individual is not “acting on” another, and he therefore does not account for more than one individual joining together to act with each other. Instead, Foucault argues that power operates at all levels of social interaction, in all social institutions, by all people (ibid).

To Foucault, power and knowledge are closely tied together, and serve to reinforce one another, where he uses doctors as an example. Their knowledge of health and illness gives them power ‘over’ patients (Foucault, 1982). Foucault further describes the development of discourses that provide ways of discussing power and knowledge. Foucault believes that every production of knowledge serves the interest of power. He talks about three characteristics of power: power is productive; it is only exercised by individuals but never

possessed by them; and power is involved in every social relation (ibid). Since an individual is constituted by power, its existence and identity are “power effects”. The individual exercises power at certain times and in certain places as a functionary of powers intentions, but not in its own intention. He further claims that:

There is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject... the rationality of power is characterized by tactics that are often quite explicit at the restricted level where they are inscribed tactics which, becoming connected to one another (Foucault, 1980:95).

Foucault challenges the idea that power is wielded by people or groups by way of “episodic” or “sovereign” acts of domination or coercion, seeing it instead as dispersed and pervasive. In his own words: “power is everywhere, and comes from everywhere so in this sense it is neither an agency nor a structure” (Foucault, 1998:63).

Foucault is one of the few writers on power who recognises that “power is not just a negative, coercive or repressive thing that forces us to do things against our wishes, but can also be a necessary, productive and positive force in society” (Gaventa, 2003:2). I find this point particularly relevant for my thesis, because the empowerment process should be “a positive force in society”. Furthermore, Foucault is of the view that power produces knowledge. Power and knowledge directly imply one another, according to Foucault. The women in this research did receive teachings about their own rights – which leads them to an increased power – if one follows Foucault’s interpretation. There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge. Similarly, there is no knowledge, which does not presuppose power relations. Power, in this sense, can be a necessary force to balance the power between men and women. This is definitely a fair point in the empowerment process.

3.3 Rowlands feminist model of power

Most frameworks for understanding power are apparently neutral: they make no comment about how power is distributed within a society, and there is no consideration of the power dynamics of gender, or of race, class, or any other force of oppression (Rowlands, 1997:11).

In the previous subchapter, different theories of power were presented, however as this quote illustrates, Rowlands criticises the lack of understanding of how power is distributed within the society. In her framework “a feminist model of power” she draws on the thinking of

Foucault, but also incorporates a gender analysis of power relations that includes not only the “tangible expressions of power, but also an understanding of how internalized oppression creates barriers to women's exercise of power, thereby contributing to the maintenance of inequality between men and women” (Rowlands 1997:12).

3.3.1 A feminist model of power

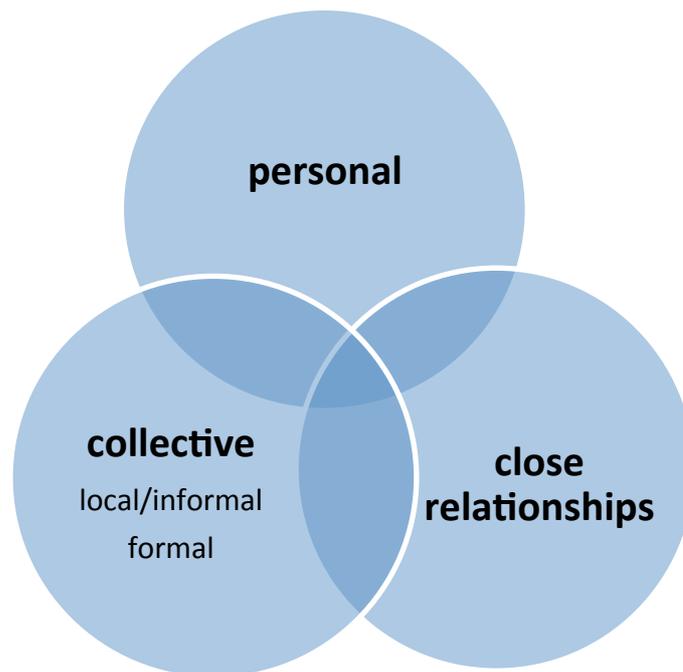
Rowlands underlines that the importance of empowerment must involve undoing of negative social constructions, “so that people come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and influence decisions” (Rowlands, 1997:14). Rowlands claims that to understand the process of empowerment, we need to be aware that power can take many different forms. As a result, she made a framework to explain various forms of power. In addition to Rowlands original framework, I have chosen to include supplementary theory from VeneKlasen and Miller (2007).

- *Power over*: “is a controlling power, which may be responded to with compliance, resistance (which weakens processes of victimization) or manipulation” (Rowlands, 1997:13). “Power over is the most recognized form of power and has many negative associations: such as repression, force, coercion, discrimination, corruption, and abuse. Power is seen as win-lose kind of relationship” (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2007:45). *Power over* can refer to gaining control over financial, physical and knowledge-based assets, including access to employment and income generating activities. Rowlands suggests that through extending this analysis to other forms of social differentiation, one can understand power as mainly exercised by various dominant social, political, economic, or cultural groups over those who are marginalized. By looking at power in this sense, Rowlands describes it as “zero-sum: the more power one person has, the less the other has” (Rowlands, 1997:9-10). This interpretation can easily become a crucial issue, because if power is defined as *power over*, then the only solution to this inequitable distribution of power will be that women gain power at the expense of men. Through this view, the notion of ‘women becoming empowered’ can easily be seen as threatening to some, when the assumption is that there will be some kind of reversal of relationship where men will not only lose power but also face the possibility of having power wielded over them by women (Rowlands, 1997). Men’s fear of losing control can be an obstacle to women’s empowerment. But is it necessarily an outcome of women’s empowerment that results in men losing power? And should a loss of power be something to fear?

- *Power to*: “is a generative or productive power (sometimes incorporating or manifesting as forms of resistance or manipulation) which creates new possibilities and actions without domination” (Rowlands, 1997:11). *Power to* can be related to having more influence in decision-making within either the household or community. More specifically it refers to women having power in the areas that are not regarded as men’s domain. *Power to* refers to the unique potential of every person to shape his/her life and world. “When based on mutual support, it opens up the possibilities of joint action. Citizen education and leadership development for advocacy are based on the belief that each individual has the power to make a difference” (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2007:45).
- *Power with*: “is a sense of the whole being greater than the sum of the individuals, especially when a group tackles problems together” (Rowlands, 1997:11). *Power with* refers to having the ability to organise with others and to improve conditions in the greater society. *Power with* has to do with cooperation despite of different interests, and rather focus on building collective strength. As a result of this mutual support, solidarity and collaboration, *power with* can multiply the individual talents and knowledge. “*Power with* can help build bridges across different interests to transform or reduce social conflict and promote equitable relations” (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2007:45).
- *Power from within*: “is the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each and one of us and makes us truly human. Its basis is self-acceptance and self-respect, in turn, to respect for and acceptance of others as equals” (Rowlands, 1997:11). “*Power within* signifies the inner strength, based on the idea that self-confidence and acceptance can contribute to the use of power in a constructive way” (Rowlands, 1998:13). Further, she pinpoints that “empowerment of women should not be about taking away the power from men, but rather that this power is shared between men and women” (ibid). *Power from within* refers to the knowledge, individual capabilities, including self-esteem and self-belief to make changes in personal life. This involves, for instance, learning skills for a job. *Power from within* has to do with a person’s sense of self-worth and self-knowledge. “It includes an ability to recognize individual differences while respecting others. Power within is the capacity to imagine and have hope. It affirms the common human search for dignity and fulfilment” (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2007:45). Having a voice is also closely linked to *power within*, since voice refers to both the act of making known ones preferences, demands, views and interests and to the capabilities this requires (Domingo et al., 2015).

3.3.2 Dimensions of empowerment

Rowlands feminist interpretation of power (1997), presented in the previous chapter, can contribute to a broader understanding of empowerment, or in her own words they “go beyond formal and institutional definitions of power, and incorporate the idea of the personal as political” (Rowlands, 1997:11). I will now further present Rowlands three dimensions of how empowerment can be experienced, illustrated in this figure:



1. *Personal*: where empowerment is about developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the effects of internalised oppression.
2. *Relational*: where empowerment is about developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of the relationship and decisions made within it.
3. *Collective*: where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone. This includes involvement in political structures, but might also cover collective action based on cooperation rather than competition. Collective action may be locally focused - for example, groups acting at village or neighbourhood level, or it can be more institutionalised, such as the activities of national networks or the UN (Rowlands, 1997:14-15). I will now elaborate Rowlands dimensions of power further:

Personal/Individual empowerment: the individual increases levels of confidence and self-esteem, which will enhance their ability to take charge of their own needs. Rowlands argues

that individuals will be empowered when they are able to “maximize the opportunities available to them without constraints” (Rowlands, 1997:13). However, it is a process that each individual has to do at his or her own pace. Rowlands emphasises that: “even to participate in a group, you require a certain minimal sense of your own abilities and worth, as well as being able to overcome the obstacles in making the time to participate“ (Rowlands, 1995:105).

Relational empowerment: Power exists and is expressed in everyday relationships of people. According to Rowlands, *relational empowerment* means that: “empowerment is about developing the ability to negotiate an influence the nature of relationship and decisions made with it” (Rowlands, 1997:15). Empowerment is a process rather than an end product, and will vary according to the circumstances. At the same time, she believes that “there is a core to the empowerment process, which consists of increases in self-confidence and self-esteem, a sense of agency and of “self” in a wider context, and a sense of *dignidad*, which means being worthy of having a right to respect from others” (Rowlands, 1997:129-130). While empowerment of women often refers to the individual women’s improvement, the relational empowerment tends to be neglected. However, social relationships can build strong bonds and is of great value for both personal and collective empowerment.

Collective empowerment: While individual empowerment is one ingredient in achieving empowerment at the collective and institutional levels, concentration on individuals alone is not enough. Changes are needed in the collective abilities of individuals to take charge of identifying and meeting their own needs – in households, communities, organisations, institutions, and societies. At the same time, we must recognise that the effectiveness of such group activity rests also on the individual empowerment. People need to be involved in identification of appropriate indicators of change, and in the setting of criteria for evaluating impact. As the empowerment process proceeds, these will inevitably need to be modified and revised (Rowlands, 1995).

Women organising with other women around shared interests build their capabilities for voice and influence. The experience of group cohesion and solidarity can contribute to self-affirmation at the individual and collective level, give support and legitimacy to gender equality agendas and enable women to exert the collective power needed to shift gender norms (Domingo et al., 2015:3).

Rowlands emphasise that empowerment must be seen as a process, this is also stated by Momsen who describe empowerment as a process whereby “women and men gain self-confidence so that they are able to participate in all aspects of development, including decision-making” (Momsen, 2004:14). The notion that empowerment is both a process and an outcome, is also recognised by Parpart et al. (2002), who argue for a feminist interpretation, meaning to “recognize that local empowerment is always embedded in regional, national, as well as global contexts” (Parpart et al in Hopper, 2012:112).

The bottom line is that individual empowerment influences collective empowerment and vice versa. Adams states that “empowerment is not only a source to make changes in your own life, but through personal empowerment that will benefit the society as well” (Adams, 2008:8). Adams argues that this will be the case, because increased empowerment tends to change a person in a positive way, and makes the individual become more capable of helping others and improve the situation for people around them. Almost like a “contagious effect”, only in a positive way. The means by which individuals, groups and/or communities become able to take control of their circumstances and achieve their own goals, thereby being able to work towards helping themselves and others to maximise the quality to their lives (Adams, 2008).

3.4 Women and empowerment

In the first subchapter empowerment was presented as one of the primary forces for poverty reduction and as a source to development. I will now continue with theories that focus more specific on women’s empowerment process.

Empowerment signifies a change in a person’s range of life-influencing choices, and women are a particularly vulnerable and disempowered group that makes them an interesting and important group to study (Narayan-Parker, 2005:39)

Of particular relevance for empowerment are inequalities that are produced by the relations between different groups, through unequal social interactions and associated processes of socialisation. Since women are often seen as subordinate to men, this can result in many women experiencing inequalities not only with respect to economic resources, but also with respect to social, cultural and political factors. Women that are poor are even more exposed to this inequality (Narayan-Parker, 2002).

3.4.1 Empowerment as a process

As stated in the introduction, I will focus on empowerment described as a “process” opposed to a condition or state of being. This is a distinction that is a key-defining feature of empowerment. However, this is one of the reasons why empowerment can be difficult to measure. Hannan defines empowerment of women as:

A process whereby women individually and collectively become aware of how power structures, processes and relationships operate in their lives and gain the self-confidence and strength to challenge the resulting gender inequalities (Hannan, 2003:2).

Women’s empowerment is a process of personal and social change, and it involves that women gain power, both individually and collectively in order to gain control over their lives. Slettebø describes empowerment as a “goal to increase individual or collective power, in order for individuals, family or the local society to improve their situation, welfare or life quality” (Slettebø, 2000:77). Similar, Batliwala highlights that empowerment is a process “which must enable women to discover new possibilities, new options and a growing repertoire of choices” (Batliwala, 1993:11). Batliwala also distinguishes between personal and collective empowerment. In her opinion empowerment is a spiral, rather than a cycle because it affects all the people involved to change. “Empowerment is thus not merely a change of mindset, but a visible demonstration of change which the world around is forced to acknowledge, respond to and accommodate as best it may” (Batliwala, 1993:10). She also highlights that:

Women’s empowerment, if is a real success, does mean that the loss of men’s traditional power and control over the women in their household: control of her body and her physical mobility; the right to spend family income on personal pleasures; the right to abdicate from all responsibility for housework [...] and the countless other ways in which poor men - and indeed men of every class - have unjustly confined women (Batliwala, 1993:9).

Batliwala further states that: “the process of women’s empowerment will also liberate men of gender stereotyping, just like women” (Batliwala, 1993:9). Batliwala believes that it is important to ask about the women’s own experiences and realities to promote “self-recognition and positive self-image, stimulate critical thinking and deepen understanding of the structures of power” (Batliwala, 1993:13). This also includes that women are able to “identify and prioritise issues for action based on expanding awareness, including new

information and knowledge” (ibid). Batliwala writes that through both critical analysis and informed decision-making, including encouraging women, it can result in more women making independent choices for their personal life and in the public sphere. Hazel Johnson looks more specifically at women’s empowerment in the context of the increase in women’s organisations and collective activities in Latin America:

Women’s empowerment involves gaining a voice, having mobility and establishing a public presence. Although women can empower themselves by obtaining some control over different aspects of their daily lives, empowerment also suggests the need to gain some control over power structures, or to change them (Johnson in Rowlands, 1997:18).

Kabeer states that empowerment is defined as a process, and the results of a process, of transforming the relations of power between individuals and social groups. Kabeer gives a definition where empowerment is understood as “the process by which women (or men), individually or collectively, gain the ability to make and enact strategic life choices” (Kabeer, 1999:437). Furthermore, she states “a woman’s ability to make strategic choices has three interrelated elements: access to resources [1], the ability to use these to define and act on goals or choices [2], and the achievements or “realised capabilities” that results from these actions [3]” (ibid).

3.4.2 Gender inequality and development aid

Gender inequality is a complex process that continually has to be put forward. But what is gender inequality? The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) has turned the question around and writes: “Gender equality is achieved when women and men, girls and boys, have equal rights, life prospects and opportunities, and the power to shape their own lives and contribute to society” (SIDA, 2015:1).

Gender inequality is strongly correlated with poverty, and it is therefore relevant to understand how empowerment of women can lead to economic development processes. The role of development aid in the area of gender equality is wide, and begins when the budgets are processed in the donor countries. The trend is that an increasingly large share of aid is now prioritised to women-related projects. Simultaneously, the UN seeks to help ensure that also the recipient countries’ own national budget to a larger degree takes women’s realities into account (Jørgensen, 2010:199).

Since this research investigates how empowerment is achieved in a specific development aid project, it is useful to ask how empowerment can be most usefully applied in a development context. Keller and Mbwewe provide one of few definitions of empowerment with specific focus on development:

A process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination (Keller and Mbwewe, 1991 in Rowlands, 1995:104).

A common assumption is that power automatically comes through economic strength. Rowlands criticises aid programs that build on demands and intentions for the people who participate in them. Though she agrees power can lead to economic strength, it does not necessarily result in this: “rather it depends on the specific relations determined by factors like gender, culture or class” (Rowlands, 1995:104). For marginalised people, economic activities may give new options, however, it does not necessarily result in helping people take charge of their lives, or provide influence on a larger scale. Rowlands claims that in order to influence your own life, it has to involve a range of factors such as: “self-esteem, information, analytic skills, ability to identify and tap into available resources, political and social influence, and so on” (Rowlands, 1995:104).

In other words, an empowerment approach based on economic activity within DAP must pay attention to more than the activity itself. In order to engage poor and marginalised people, it is important that the methodology is neither “top-down”, directive or in any way encourages dependency. Rowlands states that: “true empowerment is a process that cannot be imposed by outsiders - although appropriate external support and intervention can speed up and encourage it” (Rowlands, 1995:105). She suggest that what is needed is a facilitative approach, which means to have an attitude based on “complete respect for, and confidence in, the people being worked with, or accompanied” (ibid). In order to succeed in a facilitative approach, it requires “conscious and sustained efforts to modify that pattern of behaviour and to clarify mutual expectations” (ibid).

3.5 Women’s economic and democratic empowerment

SIDA states that: “women’s economic empowerment and gender equality have strong bearings on poverty reduction, growth and human development” (SIDA, 2015:5). SIDA defines women’s economic empowerment as: “the process, which increases women’s real

power over economic decisions that influence their lives and priorities in society” (SIDA, 2015). In the same paragraph, SIDA provides an answer to this challenge:

Women’s economic empowerment can be achieved through equal access to and control over critical economic resources and opportunities, and the elimination of structural gender inequalities in the labour market, including a better sharing of unpaid care work (SIDA, 2015:8).

Economic prosperities and rights are important elements in achieving empowerment of women. As Mehra et al (2012) writes: “Key elements of success include responding to women’s priorities to obtain employment and income; recognizing that economic empowerment of women is an important entry in working with women” (Mehra et al, 2012:149). Rowlands seems to agree that economic empowerment is an important element of empowerment, but also argues that participation in the political decision-making process is important. She explains that one way of understanding empowerment is that it brings people who are outside the decision-making process into it. This understanding of empowerment puts a strong emphasis on “participation in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making” (Rowlands, 1997:13).

One of the most powerful tools to help women out of poverty is to give them access to economic opportunities. The female labour force participation rate in Bolivia is 64% (2016) according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), which is one of the highest in Latin America. However, women continue to hold the main responsibility for household chores and childcare. Also, despite the large participation of women in the labour market, they are still generally considered secondary wage earners and are paid less than their male counterparts (WB, 2012). In the HDR it is also stated that: “women also have to juggle paid employment outside the home and unpaid care work inside the home as well as balance their productive and reproductive roles” (UNDP-HDR, 2016:112). While the responsibility of income and financial well-being have traditionally been men’s domain, the women have the burden of unpaid and low-income work, and as a result, the women have a lower status than men.

“Women’s empowerment” and “gender equality” are concepts that are separate, but also closely related. The UN writes in the World Survey 2009, that: “Women’s equal access to and control over economic and financial resources is critical for the achievement of gender

equality and empowerment of women and for equitable and sustainable economic growth and development” (UN, 2009:5). When women get access to economic resources, it will also give them increased control in other areas of their lives, which will increase the gender equality since the women can be more independent. However, this is unfortunately not the case in many countries. The UN establishes that: “Women continue to be absent from key decision-making forums shaping the allocation of economic and financial resources and opportunities, which further perpetuates gender inequality” (ibid).

The rationale that gender equality will lead to greater economic prosperity is of course not only bound to “developing countries”. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) claim they have evidence that improvement of gender equality in the European Union alone could generate an additional 10.5 million jobs by 2050, and EU Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita could increase up to nearly 10% in the same period. Gender equality does undoubtedly have an enormous economic potential worldwide (EIGE, 2017).

But not only economic prosperity or participation in the decision-making process is enough to empower women. Creating opportunities for women requires ensuring women’s empowerment in the economic, political and cultural spheres. According to the HDR from 2016: “by investing in girls and women bring multidimensional benefits – for example if all girls in developing countries were to complete secondary education, the under-five mortality rate would be halved (UNDP-HDR, 2016:112). As more girls finish primary and secondary education, they can carry on to higher education, enabling them to do the work of the future and move up the career ladder. “One aspect of freedom of agency is the extent of women’s agency and the extent to which women are able to shape decisions that affect their lives. From a human development perspective, this is extremely important, but difficult to capture quantitatively in all its dimensions (UNDP-HDR, 2016:96-98).

3.5.1 Inequalities related to education and work

The previous subchapter illustrated the importance of economic elements in women empowerment:

Women’s economic empowerment is one of the most important factors that can contribute to gender equality between women and men. Evidence shows that gender equality and women’s economic empowerment contributes to economic growth, poverty reduction and the fulfilment of human rights and social justice commitments (SIDA, 2015:29).

However, there are still many inequalities related to both education and work, in particular this is related to many women's low income and their heavy workload. Nussbaum analyses this issue further: "women are often burdened with the "double day" of taxing employment and full responsibility for housework and child care" (Nussbaum, 2001:1). The reasoning continues with a hypothesis that women lack opportunities for play and for the cultivation of their imaginative and cognitive faculties as a result of the heavy workload. As a result, these factors give women fewer opportunities than men to live freely. "In all these ways, unequal social and political circumstances give women unequal human capabilities. All too often women are not treated in their own right - as persons with dignity who deserve respect from laws and institutions" (Nussbaum, 2000:1-2). As a result of this inequality, there are economic and political obstacles, such as, "the lack of employment opportunities in the area, the tendency of men to control family income, and the impunity enjoyed by men who use violence against women" (Rowlands, 1997:114).

Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental dimensions of human development. "A majority of developing regions has achieved gender parity in areas like primary education, and gaps have narrowed in secondary and tertiary education, but in most areas progress has been too slow and uneven" (UNDP-HDR, 2016:166). This is one of many examples that the gender gap still exists, in particular when it comes to opportunities. The 2016 Global Gender Gap Report indicates that: "the progress is still too slow for realizing the full potential of half of humanity within our lifetimes" (UNDP-HDR, 2016:165).

3.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter has illustrated that power and empowerment are closely related. As pointed out in the introduction, power-relations are essential in the discussion of the empowerment process, because when women have increased power, they also have an increased ability to develop, both on an individual level and collectively. This chapter has presented some of the central empowerment theories that I have chosen for this research, and also highlighted some of the inequalities that women face, in particular related to education, job opportunities and heavy workload. I will use Rowlands dimensions of empowerment in the analysis, and the feminist model of power will serve as a structure for the discussion chapter, to explain the informant's empowerment process, and particularly to explain how this process can lead to increased power for the women.

4 Methodology

Methodology is a significant part of this thesis and it clarifies which approach will be used when collecting the data material. First, the research design will be presented. Second, the research strategy and method will be discussed before continuing with the researchers methodological challenges and limitations, with emphasis on how the material was collected. Third, the research ethics and limitations will be discussed, followed by the quality of the research. Lastly, I will assess the ethical considerations followed during this research project.

4.1 Research design

In this thesis I have chosen to use a qualitative research strategy. According to Bryman “qualitative research focuses on words rather than numbers, and on understanding the social world through its participants” (Bryman, 2016:375). I have chosen to conduct qualitative interviews with women that have participated in MAN-B’s projects in Caranavi. The approach in qualitative interviews tends to be much less structured than in quantitative research, and there is a greater emphasis on increased generality in the formulation of initial research ideas and on the informants own perspectives (Bryman, 2012). Since this was the intention and goal for this research, the informants were told that the aim of the interviews was to gain knowledge of their personal experiences and opinions. Qualitative interviews encourage this, because straying of topics can provide insight to what the informants themselves believe to be relevant and important. However, by allowing the researcher to pick up new aspects that occur through the interviews, there is a danger of falling into traps such as asking leading questions (Bryman, 2012:475).

In a qualitative interview it is crucial that questions are structured beforehand, whilst still proving certain openness to the informants in order for them to answer with their own words and formulations. Conducting interviews also entails the responsibility of following research ethics persistently during the writing process.

The choice of the research topic was guided by the belief that a case study design would be most advantageous. According to Bryman (2012), the case study design entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case. An example of case study design is to include research on a single community study. A case study of women’s experiences of empowerment in Caranavi, Bolivia is employed in this thesis, because the method enables a comprehensive understanding of the women’s experience of the process. A case study is defined as “an

empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 2003:13).

4.2 Research Strategy and method

As pointed out in the previous chapter, I have chosen to conduct a case study in Bolivia, using semi-structured interviews as a method. According to Stake (1995), “case study research is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question” (Stake 1995 in Bryman, 2012:66). Different research projects can have different approaches. It may for instance be deductive, which means that the research is grounded in one specific theory that shall be tested. My research, however, takes an inductive approach, which means that the research often can lead to theory (Bryman, 2016:375).

This research will present an understanding and analysis of women’s experiences of empowerment, through DAP initiated by MAN-B in Caranavi. For this, I chose qualitative research interviews to collect data. Qualitative research aims to understand the social world through its participants. As Bryman (2016) states: “language is bound to be of importance for social researchers. It is, after all, through language that we ask people questions in interviews, and through which the questions are answered” (Bryman, 2016:25). The interviews were conducted within the terms of the same theoretical framework. This implies that the use of semi-structured interviewing was a balance between predetermined and follow-up questions during the interviews.

The empirical data was gathered during six weeks of fieldwork in Bolivia, from April to May 2017. The main material is based on qualitative interviews conducted in the Caranavi districts, where MAN-B has initiated several projects on agriculture and women’s projects. In this thesis, the emphasis will be on the women’s projects. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), a qualitative research interview attempts to: “understand the world from the subject’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015:3). Though this research is limited, the primary goal is to find the “subjective meaning of social actors, and interoperate their actions and social world from their own point of view” (Bryman, 2016:25).

4.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

The interviews conducted are qualitative and semi-structured, which is a more open form of interview, where the conversations can be more “easy-going” and help the informants to share openly. According to Bryman, a semi-structured interview typically refers to: “a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule but is able to vary the sequence of questions” (Bryman, 2012:212). Semi-structured interviews differ from a structured interview schedule because the questions are more general, which provides the researcher with more freedom to ask further questions in response to what the researcher regards as significant replies (Bryman, 2012). Another advantage with semi-structured interviews is that they enable access to the reflections of the women involved in MAN-B’s projects, which can provide valuable insight into the influence of the projects, in terms of both personal and collective empowerment.

In structured interviews there is a stricter line-up and all the informants get the exact same questions. However, Halvorsen (2008) emphasises that the benefit of unstructured interviews is that one can highlight the research question through different perspectives and thereby get a more comprehensive understanding. In unstructured interviews, the interviewer should both control the conversation, and at the same time let the informant take the lead. As unstructured interviews aim to have “the first-hand knowledge to a phenomenon or social system that the researcher is interested to understand” (Halvorsen, 2008:137). I found this method most relevant when investigating women’s experience of empowerment.

The interviews in this thesis are built and shaped based on the research question. In order to answer the research question, it was helpful to highlight relevant topics and make a list of questions for each of the topics. Larsen pinpoints that the strength of this method is that the informants can formulate their own answers (Larsen, 2007:83). The questions are open for certain flexibility, however staying close to the interview guide made it easier for me in the analysing process, especially considering comparison between the informants’ answers and their interpretations. In my opinion, interviews are advantageous in that I am able to meet persons face to face, and by this personal presence, it was a lot easier to control the conversation and solve misunderstandings, since they could be clarified straight away. I found it helpful to have the ability to comment directly in the interview situation.

Furthermore, it was also an advantage that the informant did not know the questions that came later in the interview, and earlier responses did not affect the questions that come later.

4.2.2 Selection of informants

Getting in touch with informants in a foreign country can be quite a challenge. The first preparation involved finding informants for the interviews. I contacted one of the Norwegian employees in Bolivia, who helped me establish contact with the local leaders from MAN-B. The cooperation with MAN-B was a door opener to the projects in Caranavi, and helped me reduce the time searching for interviewees.

The criterion for selecting informants was mainly that they were women involved in the projects of MAN-B in the Caranavi district. These women have first-hand knowledge regarding the effects of the projects and how they have influenced their lives. I considered looking at two groups of women, where one had participated in the women's projects while the other had not, in order to compare the different results. There are several issues that could be interesting to investigate; however the scope of this thesis has some limitations. Thus, instead of conducting interviews with two different groups, the selection of informants rather represented women from different local communities of different ages and life-situations. The informants also differ in their experience and participation in MAN-B's projects. Some had participated for under a year and others for five years. A few of the women were engaged in the projects as leaders, but the majority were participants of the projects. However, all of them were participants in the women's projects of MAN-B. Evidently, with the topic of this thesis being "empowerment of women", the target group in this research was women. For this reason, the research does not include interviews with men or children. The age limit was set to 18 years. There was no upper age limit, it was rather emphasised to include women of different ages, to see if there could be any differences in the women's opinions, depending on age.

The data material collected through these interviews is the main material used in this thesis. However, the selection of informants has some limitations that will be presented here. Due to difficulties in organising meetings, and particularly with transport to the different districts, the women were chosen randomly as we were visiting various local communities, related to MAN-B's projects with agriculture in the area. Further, the local leader for the women's

projects introduced me to the women, and I presented my research project and invited women to be interviewed. It was important that the women participated voluntarily.

According to the MAN-B's local representative, around 200 women participate in the women's projects in the Caranavi, 80 of them have leader positions in smaller groups, and 16 hold important positions. In the beginning, I was mostly introduced to local leaders, as they were often more comfortable with being interviewed, and because they were often present when the team from MAN-B visited the different areas (to check on projects related to agriculture). However, in order to make sure the women represented a variety, I sought to find interview objects that were also newly introduced to the projects. What I realised, especially when I interviewed women that were new to the projects, was that it seemed to be more challenging for them because they were unfamiliar to the whole interview situation. It made me even more aware of how I presented the projects, and I made sure to give them information and assurance about the idea of the research project and that I was not looking for "fixed answers". Additionally, it was important for me to include informants without any background as leaders, since it provided me with a variety needed for the validity of the research.

4.2.3 The informants background

In order to fully understand the women's situation, it is useful to have information of their background. This subchapter will provide a brief presentation of the informants. The research contains ten interviews conducted one-on-one with women from the age of 19 up to 43. The women came from different local communities around the Caranavi district. Five of the women were married, three were widows, and two were unmarried. All but one had children. They had from one to seven children each, and three of them had grandchildren. The informants had participated in MAN-B's women's projects for a various amount of time: five women had participated for five years, one for four years, one for three years, one two years, and the last two women had participated less than a year.

The majority of the women finished school at age 17 or earlier, two of the informants informed me that they were taken out of school at the age of eight. The women worked with coffee or fruit production, and other areas of agriculture. All, except two of the women underlined that the majority of their day, they worked at home, taking care of their family. One informant told me that she spent a lot of time selling handcrafts she had learned from the

MAN-B, and the last informant worked as a secretary. The women all spoke Spanish as their first language, but the majority also used Aymara¹⁰ as their second language.

4.3 Researcher in the field – methodological challenges and limitations

In qualitative research there will always be limitations and ethical principles that the researcher must be aware of. The aim of research ethics is, according to Black “to protect all persons concerned with or involved in a piece of research” (Black, 2002:23). Particularly when dealing with interviews and the evaluation of the content, various challenges arise along the process. There are several parts of the process that should be taken into account before presenting the analysis.

4.3.1 The role of the researcher

The questions and the way they are presented, affects the answers given. “Conversations between people is coloured by the interaction between the parts participating” (Røthing, 2004:22). My responsibility as a researcher was to lead the interview and make sure that the topic was made clear from the beginning of the conversation. Both before and during the interviews it was necessary to go through the interview guide and evaluate the relevance of the questions. With help from the local leaders from MAN-B, a short presentation was given to the women, to explain the topic and the aim of conducting interviews. This was a key to trust, and it made it easier for me to share more about my aim for the interviews. I was aware that responding during the interviews could affect the answers. Since my aim was to have a deeper understanding, it was wiser not to state my own opinions at any time. Rather, I focused on encouraging the informants, without leading or referring to specific expectations related to their answers. I had three topics in mind. Firstly, to have knowledge of women’s current role in the society, secondly, their knowledge of topics related to gender equality and human rights, thirdly, to hear about what the women had learned and whether their role as a woman in their family or in their local society had changed.

Another challenge with the role as a researcher is the so-called “researchers effect”, which refers to how the researcher might influence and/or affect the ability to make free interpretations of the informants and the field. Fangen (2010) recommends that the researcher is critical to his/her own understanding and also considers his/her position to the field:

¹⁰ Aymara is the language the Aymara people, and is one of Bolivia’s official languages (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017)

To be able to criticise the background of which the participants base their act on, while you strive to understand why they make the choices they do, and that they act as they do because their background, situation and environment affects them and put restrictions on them (Fangen, 2010:223).

Similar, Halvorsen states that “the researcher’s personality and way of working can affect the results of the interview” (Halvorsen, 2008:143). In other words, the researchers effect can happen because the informant wants to make a good impression or in other ways, give answers in a way he/she thinks the interviewer wants to hear. For this reason, it is important to ask control questions to avoid confusion during the interview (Larsen, 2007).

I was also aware of how other visible characteristics, such as gender, age, race, clothes, looks and appearance could influence the interview situation. The main challenge was that my appearance was immediately associated with other Norwegian employees or visitors from MAN-B, which could affect how the informants answered questions. In particular, the informants frequently wanted to thank me directly for helping them. The solution was to make it a custom in the presentation to mention that I was cooperating with MAN-B, but that I was doing an independent study. In the introduction I made it clear that nothing they told me in the interviews would be shared and that their answers would be anonymous. In every step of the process, it was necessary to gain trust and make the interview setting as close to a natural conversation as possible. During the interviews, I avoided sharing or showing my own opinions and rather encouraged the informants to share their stories, life situations, values and personal opinions.

Presenting the topic again, but formulating it in a different way, was another solution in the situations where a topic was misunderstood. Sometimes it was necessary to rephrase or repeat the questions. I also had a few control questions, to make it easier to check that the answers matched the question posed. This made me realise, even more, how important it is to have the structure of the questions beforehand, this is confirmed by Larsen (2007), who points out that it is essential to spend time in advance structuring good questions beforehand. As a result, it will make it easy to compare informants’ answers to each other. On the other hand, too much structure might also cause loss of the spontaneous hunches, which may contain information that can be useful in the study.

4.3.2 The interview process

The first step in the process of conducting interviews was making the interview guide. To have an interview guide prepared in advance was a great asset in order to ask new questions to follow up the informant's replies, rephrase or add questions during the interview. The interview guide provided a list of questions on specific topics that I wanted covered, nevertheless it was important that the informants had a great deal of flexibility in how to reply to the questions. The guide also provided me with the ability to ask questions whenever something of particular interest came up. Due to the aim of the research, it was fruitful to receive rich and detailed answers, and I was overwhelmed by how openly and generously the informants shared their thoughts and experiences. According to Bryman the unstructured nature of the semi-structured interviews can be a strength because: "it provides insights into how the research participants view the world" (Bryman, 2012:471).

The first questions evolved around the women's background and role as a woman in Caranavi. I opened the conversation with: "Can you start with presenting yourself please". The intention was to let the women decide what they wanted to share. As a result, the answers were very different and unstructured. In retrospect, I realise that that it would have been wiser to ask direct questions. Nevertheless, this information is left out to ensure that the informants are anonymous. The intention with the "open presentation" was to make the interview seem more like a normal conversation that did not impose the informants to respond in a very specific way. Furthermore, it was difficult to ask direct questions about studies or work, since the majority did not have any education after primary school and few of the women had work experience outside the home.

At the beginning of the interviews, I observed that several of the informants seemed nervous, this was particularly related to the "letter of information" handed to them. When observing the informants during the first interviews, I realised that some of the women struggled with reading the letter, which understandably made them unsure and stressed about the situation. Some of the informants seemed intimidated when given the sheet. From this I learned to start off by asking the informants if they wanted me to read the information to them, which the majority wanted me to. One of the requirements from Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) is after all, to make sure the informants are informed about the research and they have to give their consent to participate. However, it was important for me to explain the

meaning of the research and why it was necessary to have their consent. A few of the women were fast to say: “Well, well...it doesn’t matter about that paper, just ask the questions”. This made me unsure of whether the informants did not care, or simply were in a hurry. As a result, I made sure to open the conversation by presenting the approximate amount of time that the interview might take.

In other words, it was difficult to be sure about whether the women lacked motivation to participate because of little interest in the intention of the research. Lack of motivation from the informants might affect the answers given: Halvorsen states that it “demands a greater motivation from the informants to respond to open questions, rather than closed questions” (Halvorsen, 2008:12). On the other hand, closed questions push the informant to a particular form, which might give an incorrect impression of their opinions. However, as the interview continued, I realised that the main reason was that they were shy and uncomfortable with being in an unfamiliar situation. Once the conversation evolved, my experience was that they were quite eager to share their thoughts with me. In some cases, it was helpful to underline throughout the interview that I was not looking for fixed answers, but rather was looking for their personal thoughts and opinions. When I stated that the main interest was to know *their* stories and experiences, it seemed that some of the informants found it difficult to grasp. According to the local representative, many of the women were simply not used to people who wanted to hear their thoughts out loud.

The ethical precautions that were done in this thesis centre on the informants. One of these precautions is ensuring that the informants’ are anonymous. Also, my aim was to have the informants speak as freely as possible. For that reason, the background of the informants is presented in the method chapter, rather than giving information in the analysis. Other preparations involved sending an application to the NSD to have an approval to conduct the interviews. The approval of the research project was in place a few weeks later. Through this whole process their requirements for handling sensitive information has been followed. When arriving in Caranavi, all the informants received a short presentation of the project, and their rights related to their own participation, including information about confidentiality and the approval for the interview study. This includes that all the informants have given an informed consent to the participation, and also to the recordings of the interviews. These recordings will all be deleted once this thesis is handed in. NSD have high standards regarding research ethics, and has been followed strictly throughout the whole master process.

4.3.3 Context

Halvorsen makes clear that: “the most common error is how the conversations can be affected by the context” (Halvorsen, 2008:138). If the context is in the informant’s own home, the presence of other members of the family might influence what the informant chooses to share or not. In the preparations of the interviews, I wanted to make sure that the interviews were conducted in familiar settings for the informants. In that way I would be more able to understand what they were saying in the informants’ own terms.

Conducting interviews in itself has some limitations, particularly because the informants are not used to the setting. As far as possible, I tried to make sure to find a context that was familiar for the informants, and also private enough to make sure that the participants could share openly. However, this was not always in my control. We drove to various parts of the Caranavi district, and most frequently the best place to carry out the interviews was outside. For this reason, the contexts of the interviews were placed outdoors, such as in parks, and outside houses. Only two out of ten interviews were held in an office. As it was not always in my control to choose the context, I worried that being outside would affect the interviews in a negative direction, because it was difficult to guarantee that no one else could hear the conversation. However, in most cases, I visited women at their home during daytime, while their husbands were working. To my surprise, there were seemingly no negative results of having the interviews outside. Rather, my overall impression was that the women felt proud to be interviewed once they understood the field of interest, and the majority spoke loud and clear, especially when they shared about the things they had learned. It was my intention to stay focused on making the questions as open as possible, and contribute to making the conversation as informal as possible, hoping this would result in making it easier to share thoughts and opinions.

4.4 Ethical considerations

There are some limitations and challenges related to qualitative research. Particularly when conducting interviews, there are ethical considerations to take into account. I spent much time reflecting about my role as a researcher, and how to find the balance between curiosity, interest, prejudice and tolerance. My expectations before meeting with the women that participated in MAN-B’s projects, was mostly based on the impression that women were expected to fit into the traditional role as a wife-mother-maintainer of the home. I also expected women to be shy or even intimidated by talking to a foreigner, and that challenges

in order to share and be open and honest about their realities would be an obstacle. The reason for these “prejudices” was mainly based on the strong roots of machismo culture common throughout Latin America. Also, my first impression of the Bolivian culture was that the majority of people are more introverted, at least in comparison to my experiences in other parts of Latin America.

Research ethics involves a protection of individuals from being exploited within the framework of research. “The terms and conditions for the researcher’s ethical behaviour, is that an informed consent must be signed from each of the informants and all information of the individuals that the researcher receives must be kept confidential” (Fangen, 2010:245). To ensure that the informants in this interview will be protected, The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH), have established some research ethics guidelines. A fundamental ethical consideration is that “the researcher shall always work according to a fundamental respect for human dignity” (NESH, 1999 in Røthing, 2004:32). Taking this into account, it was my responsibility to treat the informants and their statements with respect and dignity at every stage of the research process. In my projects this involved not revealing the informants’ identities, or any other information that could be traced back to the women that were interviewed. All personal information was kept in a password secure computer.

There are several ethical issues that the researcher should focus on in qualitative research, particularly concerning the power balance and relations. In general, it is always important to consider power relations in social science, because power balance between researchers and participants poses significant ethical challenges (Pittaway et al. 2010:232). Heath et al. points out that researchers may have sincere beliefs in the success of a research process, especially of the effects of important human rights research and the direct impact it may have on the participants. Nevertheless, it is important that the researcher is careful with raising the participants’ expectations of outcome (Heath et al., 2007:404). In the information I gave beforehand, I underlined my intentions for the research, with the aim of having knowledge about their experiences related to the empowerment process.

In some cases, it was particularly difficult to conduct the interview because the informants seemed shy; they talked with a very low voice and answered with few words. In those situations, I tried to make the situation more comfortable and tried to encourage them. In my

experience, it was a great difference when I gave simple confirmations, like nodding my head, saying “good”, “yes” and in other ways show interest and openness. Beforehand, my intention as a researcher was to be careful with giving response, and rather focus on being an interested listener. However, it is not difficult to understand the women’s need for feedback, as the majority of the women were put in an unfamiliar situation through the interviews. For many of my informants it was their very first experience of being interviewed, and although they volunteered to be interviewed and seemed eager to start, I believe that some of the questions I asked made them feel like they had to “prove something”, in particular what they had learned. I therefore rephrased a few questions, making them more informal during the interviews. Although I had the questions checked by two of the local leaders from MAN-B, some of the questions were slightly complicated. What surprised me though, was that it seemed to actually help that I sometimes struggled with the Spanish pronunciation, and the informants helped me out. I interpreted this as making the conversation more easy-going and balanced, and it seemed to make the informants comfortable and open in the conversation.

Another ethical issue evolves around confidentiality. The participants should not be “identifiable, unless permission, because of upholding the principle of anonymity” (Black, 2002:23). There will not be given any details about the informants who have participated in my research projects. All of the informants have been informed about the research projects and its field of interest. All the participants have signed a letter of consent, where they received information about the interview being voluntary and that they can withdraw from the research project at any time during the project period, without having to mention any reason for their withdrawal. They are also informed that all the details they have given in the interviews will be anonymous. Not doing harm to the participants has been considered throughout the whole research.

I would also like to emphasise that the interviews were conducted to search for the women’s personal experiences, and not for the findings or results to be generalised. However, I believe that the findings can bring valuable insight in other DAP that work with empowerment of women.

4.5 Quality of the research

In all research it is important to look at the quality of the data, or in other words, its reliability, which according to Kvale has to do with how “dependable and consistent the data

is” (Kvale et al. 2009:250). If the data is not reliable, it will not be possible to use it to emphasise the research question or the rest of the thesis.

4.5.1 Recording

All of the interviews were recorded using an iPhone. The main reason for recording the interviews was to fully concentrate on the informants and the dynamics of the interviews. It made it easier to avoid misunderstandings because of language, since there was a chance to go through all that had been said after the interviews as well. It also made the conversations more fluent, without having to interrupt the informants while they talked. Since the women interviewed had little or no experience being in an interview situation, the recordings made it possible for me to focus on making the situation more comfortable for them, and help making sure the informants could speak more freely and openly.

Later, the recordings were sent to an assistant that helped me with transcription, which is: “constructions from an oral conversation to a written text” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015:210). The assistant signed a letter of confidentiality in order to make sure that the informants’ anonymity was ensured; she also had to delete the recording once the work was completed. In order to preserve the anonymity of the women they will be not be mentioned by names, but rather as informants through the analysis. They will be referred to as: “Informant A, B, C” up to “Informant J”. The order is random.

4.5.2 Transcription and translation

Transcription means to transform, and it is the translation from speech to written language. This process makes the interviews available for analysis. As Kvale points out, transcription is the first part of the process of analysis because of the choices that have to be made about the way to transcribe it (Kvale et al., 2009:189). Before the interviews were sent to the assistant, I made sure to go through the material and write notes, when the material was still “fresh in mind”. The assistant that helped me was told to write down the exact words and statements shared in the interview. This included incomplete sentences and pauses that occurred, in order to keep their statements as close to the original as possible. A silent pause before an answer, could for instance in some cases mean that some hesitated to answer, which could be valuable information in the interview. However, I later decided that oral expressions like “pues” (“well then”), “ya” (“right or now”) and “no ve” (you know/right) were left out because they were mostly oral expressions used while the informant was thinking, and may in written text create more chaos than is beneficial for the analysis. For example, there are many

quotes that end in questions, or the informants add “no?” (right?) at the end of the sentence. In some cases, it was a question, and in other cases it was more a need for approval. For this reason, there are places in the analysis where it is directly translated because it is a question, and other places where it is left out. In other words, they are not of much importance in understanding the statements made.

The interviews were conducted in Spanish, and then transcribed by an assistant, before I translated the majority of the material to English. Translating the data material is one of the limitations in this research, since the language will be interpreted. Translation should “in principle transport... meaning” (Derrida, 2007:198). However, it has been my aim to consider every phrase used, to ensure that the original meaning is not lost. Since I was both the researcher and the translator I was also aware that I had to be particularly considerate with how I present the material. For this reason, I also had help from a Spanish native speaker that verified and commented my translation from Spanish to English. Thus, some smaller changes in the informants’ quotes have been made in order get the core meaning in the given context. The original Spanish citation will be given in footnotes.

The translation of the material from Spanish to English was time-consuming and challenging, however it has provided me with a closer proximity to the text. I have gone through the transcription several times, and have also checked the original quotes in their full-text together with an assistant who has Spanish as his first language. In chapter five I have chosen to add some words in the quotes from the informants, in order to make it easier for the reader to get the full comprehension. After all, the interviews were oral and many of the informants talked fast and without any pauses. For this reason, I have also summed up the main points and used: [...] to illustrate the places where something not relevant for the statement presented is left out. Also relevant to mention is that in Caranavi most women speak both Spanish and Aymara. Some of the expressions are therefor in Aymara, and I had help correcting the translations of these words.

4.5.3 Coding

The coding began already when working with the research question and hypothesis, and has continued throughout the process. As the data material was gathered through the interviews, I had the opportunity to rephrase some questions and ask additional questions. After the interviews were conducted and transcribed, the coding started by using a colour pattern on the different topics mentioned in the interviews. During this process, the value of having the

questions organised beforehand paid off. However, some topics were mentioned at different places in the interviews and even new topics of relevance came up. I was also aware of trying to make some limitations to the data collected, as Lofland points out: "the researcher must guard against being captivated by the richness of data collected, so that there is a failure to give data wider significance for the social sciences" (Lofland, 1971:18). In other words, it is crucial to guard against failing to carry out a true analysis. This means that that you must "protect yourself against the conditions once called analytic interruptus" (ibid).

Coding is one of the most central processes in grounded theory. It entails reviewing transcripts and giving labels that seem to be of potential theoretical significance and/or that appear to be particularly salient within the social worlds of those being studied. Coding in qualitative data analysis tends to be in a constant state of potential revision and fluidity. The data are treated as potential indicators of concepts, and the indicators are constantly compared to see which concepts they best fit with. As Strauss puts it: "many indicators (behavioural actions or events) are examined comparatively by the analyst who then codes them, naming them as indicators of a class of events or behavioural actions" (Strauss, 1987:25).

4.5.4 Validity and reliability

An important part of the quality of a research is reliability and validity, in the ways which "they propose truthfulness and authenticity" (Bryman, 2016:384). Validation is not only a part of the method chapter or a separate stage of an investigation but involves the entire process. Validity is a key criterion in research and deals with the selection of gathering data. Kvale et al. (2009) points out that: "High validity involves credibility, meaning that the research is done in a trustworthy manner. Validity also shows whether the project is acknowledgeable, meaning if the interpretation is supported by other research (Kvale et al., 2009:254). According to Sakel and Everett (2012), validity is concerned with whether the research looks at what it is supposed to, or not and it aims to include all relevant data. In the interview context my aim was to make the situation as trustful as possible. As previously stated, the emphasis was to make sure the informants felt comfortable and free to share their thoughts, without being anxious about whether it would somehow put them in a difficult position.

In the interview process, I have aimed to ensure that the informants' statements have been interpreted in a reasonable way. Furthermore, I have taken several steps to ensure a high validity in the gathered data, such as making sure that the informants represented a variety, in terms of age, background and how long they had participated in the projects. I entered each interview with the focus to listen to the informants' stories, thoughts and opinions. When conducting the interviews, I had a gentle approach where my focus was to make the situation comfortable and open which resulted in much material.

In the role as a researcher it is always important to stay close and true to the empirical data. In other words, one should never ascribe informants' opinions they might not have or in other ways try to drag their reasoning to a point that you have no right to. Furthermore, it was important to have a critical stance toward the analysis and make sure to present my perspective on the subject studied, and to control that I did not apply selective perceptions or biased interpretations. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) sum up, "the interviewer here plays the devil's advocate toward his or her own findings" (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015:284-285). What the women in my interviews shared are their own words, thoughts and meanings that I have no right to change from their core meaning, or in other ways try to push in a direction that might serve the thesis in any way. However, I also examined the data material and checked whether there were some underlying structures that could affect the informant's ability to interpret their own situation. One example is the tendency of many to give the exact same definitions and examples. The obvious reason was that they had all participated in the same courses. To ask follow-up questions in these situations was necessary, in order to find out how each of the informants had interpreted what was said, and also to reflect further on the topics.

Reliability has to do with how dependable and consistent the data material is (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:250). Reliability is about whether a researcher could later enter the same project and make findings that would make the findings in my thesis valid or invalid, based on the same interviews. In other words, reliability is about whether we can trust the results or not (Fangen, 2010:251). Another matter is the research's generalizability, which is about whether the results can be transferred to other situations or interviewees. The interviews and the women's contributions to the research cannot give the entire picture of either empowerment of women, or the effects of MAN-B's projects in Caranavi. The interviews and the material conducted were given in a specific context, which make it difficult to be

comparable. The selections represent women who have participated in MAN-B's projects in Caranavi. In another part of Bolivia, or in a different country, the results might be very different from my findings. Due to these research limitations in both time and size, there are also a quite small number of women who have been interviewed. According to a local leader, there are a total of more or less 200 women who have participated in the women's group in Caranavi, and I have only conducted interviews with ten. It is important to point out that the findings could have been different if there were more informants participating or if the selection of informants was done strategically. Nevertheless, I believe that the informants provide valuable insight in how they have experienced the DAP in Caranavi.

4.6 Concluding remarks

My intention with this chapter has been to clarify the approach applied, and to explain how I collected the data material. The chapter has presented the methods applied in the research and explained the processes of data gathering and data analysis that has led to the findings presented in the next chapter. The methodological considerations and in particular the ones related to qualitative research interviews have been taken into account. The ethical considerations and quality of the research has also been presented.

5 Analysis

My research question asks how the women in MAN-B's projects experience the empowerment process:

How do the women participating in MAN-B's projects in Caranavi, Bolivia, experience empowerment?

In this chapter I will present the informants experiences, thoughts and views. I have chosen to explore the different views based on the same categorisation that was used in the interview guide. The interview guide was divided in two, the first part being about the role as a woman in Caranavi (their local society) and the second part was about human rights and gender equality, seeing this as a relevant part of the empowerment process. Among the questions I asked were ideas on how to achieve equal rights for both men and women, and whether this was a topic that could be discussed within the family. I was uncertain of the experiences the women had with the knowledge of human rights and gender equality. Furthermore, I will be using Rowlands three dimensions (personal, relational and collective) of how empowerment can be experienced, which were presented in 3.3.2. I believe that the dimensions of empowerment can lead to a broader understanding of empowerment, particularly in the analysis. I will present each of these dimensions as they occur in the analysis.

5.1 The role and experiences of women in Caranavi

First, I will focus on *personal empowerment*, which involves “developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity” (Rowlands, 1997:14). In order to investigate the experienced empowerment process of the informants, the first step is to understand their role as women in their local context. The informants were from different parts of the Caranavi district, and in the introduction I asked the informants about their role as a woman in their local society. My field of interest was to understand more about what characterises women in their local society, what their own experiences as women were and what was expected of them. As a result of the answers given, I have categorised these responses and divided them into four parts: fear, gender inequality and machismo culture, violence, and self-esteem.

5.1.1 Fear

The first step to gain more knowledge of the women's situation and experiences was to investigate what characterises a typical woman in their local society. The informants explained that fear was one of the greatest obstacles:

The women here are very shy, very quiet, sometimes we do not ... right now we do not manifest very well, because that's how it is when you're scared (Informant D).¹¹

Earlier, I did not go anywhere, I did not go out, I was afraid and I did not share [my thoughts and opinions] that much (Informant I).¹²

Many of the informants shared quotes similar to this when asked about the characteristics of women in their local society, indicating that fear is an obstacle for women to be empowered in Bolivia. It seems like being shy is often related to fear. This might be related to the machismo culture that is strongly held in Bolivia and raises the question; how does fear hinder the empowerment-process? In this context, "being shy" seems related to both lack of self-esteem and "part of the culture" in the sense that Bolivian women often are characterised as shy.

Sometimes we [women] are afraid of talking in public. Maybe as women we oppress ourselves at home. But being part of and going to these workshops and courses [from MAN-B] is a good thing if one wants to develop [social skills]. [However] there are examples of men who don't let them [the women] go [to the courses]. So, it might be either because the husband [will not let the women go] or because the women lack interest (Informant J).¹³

Informant J uses "desenvolverse" which can be translated to "get along" or "to manage". In the interviews however, many of the informants used the similar word frequently when they referred to their development of social skills, like for example learning to speak out in public. Informant J expresses how women can be afraid of talking in public or expressing their opinions out loud. She seems hesitant in her own opinions regarding this, however she does

¹¹ Las mujeres son muy tímidas, muy calladas, a veces no nos... ahorita mismo no nos manifestamos bien y ya de por sí a uno ya le da miedo (Informante D).

¹² Antes no salía a ningún lado, no salía, miedo tenía, no compartía tanto (Informante I).

¹³ A veces uno tenemos miedo de desenvolvernos. Quizás como mujeres nos oprimimos más en la casa, pero al ver, ser o ir cursos, así talleres, es bueno para que te desenvuelvas. Pero hay momentos que otros hombres no les dejan, hablando así de... digamos del esposo o no hay interés de la mujer digamos (Informante J).

not only blame men for not letting women attend the courses, but states that women's lack of interest for participating in the courses might as well be the reason:

My defect is that I am shy, but we should continue empowering, right? We should always try to move forward, like participating in public positions either in the community, in the municipality or at national level. We are able to take these positions (Informant G).¹⁴

Informant G admits that she is limited by her modesty, still her goal is to move forward and be ambitious. She states that women are able to participate in different positions. Informant F also shares her opinion, and agrees that women should participate and stand up in areas where men dominate:

I want many more women to participate [in the courses], so they can learn, and more than anything else: to lose the fear, because we are women with so much fear. We need to learn to express ourselves [in public] and decide to stand up [participate] where men dominate now (Informant F).¹⁵

Informant F points out the need for women to express their opinions, she also seems to emphasise that on one hand, women are dependent on men, but on the other hand, women need to stand up in the areas where men alone dominate now. This brings us over to the next chapter about gender inequality and machismo.

5.1.2 Gender inequality and machismo culture

When I asked my informants about their roles as women in their own local society, the majority of the women portrayed a patriarchal society, where the women's role basically involved taking care of the family and household, while the men were involved in work and other activities outside the home. Furthermore, the informants were asked whether they engaged in questions relating human rights and gender equality. Gender inequality is often a result of male patriarchy, more known as machismo. The informants gave examples of obstacles as a direct result of the machismo culture, such as gender-based violence, exclusion in meetings, lack of economic resources, and lack of freedom in general. It was frequently mentioned that the "machismo culture was to blame" for lack of gender equality in Caranavi,

¹⁴ Mi defecto es soy tímida, pero debemos siempre estar digamos empoderando no? Siempre estar adelante, tal vez asumir cargos ya sea públicos o puede ser en la comunidad, en el municipio o nacional. Sí podemos tener cargos (Informante G).

¹⁵ Yo quiero que participen muchas mujeres, así para aprender, y más que todo perder el miedo, muy miedosas somos las mujeres. Así aprender a expresarnos, decidir pararse contra los hombres (Informante F).

while others based their opinions on what was seen as the stereotypic roles for men and women. Informant A states that the machismo culture has to break down:

To me, it seems that empowerment is more for women because of the patriarchy¹⁶ [man-dominance]. And it has been like that for years. Right now, we should “de-patriarchalize” [deconstruct man-dominance], right? We are still in a phase of machismo, but we have to break it down. For so many years [...] we have had to stand out this violence [against women]. Not only us, but also all previous women [previous generations] have suffered a lot (Informant A).¹⁷

Informant B also refers to the struggles with the machismo culture, and particularly the discrimination women are facing in the society. In her opinion achieving gender equality requires a fight:

Well, on the topic of gender equality we are still fighting, right? For those of us who are [participating] in the organisation at least, we know what gender [equality] is about both men and women, and that we have to fight together [in order] to get where we want and to have equal opportunities, [in particular] to have equal job opportunities. Well, in this moment I have to say we are failing. Still there are other communities where the Misión¹⁸ (MAN-B) has not even arrived yet, or they [women] have not been organised, and [therefore] they are still fighting [against discrimination]. In this discrimination, there is no gender equality. There are still places with lots of machismo, where the men do not value the women at all. And they do not even know of the rights their sisters¹⁹ have. We still have a long way to go and we are in the middle of this fight, through working with gender equality projects. Always, right? (Informant B).²⁰

Informant B expresses that in her community they still have a long way to go in order to achieve gender equality, and that now they “are failing”. Still, she points at how the women

¹⁶ Patriarchy is defined as: “a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it”(Oxford Dictionary, 2017b).

¹⁷ A mí me parece que eso de empoderamiento yo pienso que más va a las mujeres, porque eso del patriarcal que dicen no? Eso ha sido por años. Hay que ya “despatriarcar” todo no? O sea estamos en la etapa de lo que es el machismo pero hay que romper eso. Porque tantos años [...] hemos soportado la violencia, no será nosotros pero nuestras anteriores mujeres han sufrido mucho (Informante A).

¹⁸ The informants most often refer to MAN-B as “La Misión”.

¹⁹ Sisters and brothers in this context do not refer to the biological sisters, but is rather an approach to women and men in the same local society. It is most commonly used in a religious context.

²⁰ Bueno en tema de género todavía estamos en la lucha no? Las que estamos en la organización por lo menos ya entendemos, sabemos qué es género, tanto hombre y mujer tenemos que luchar ambos para llegar a lo que queremos no? A una igual de oportunidades, a una igualdad de trabajo. Pero por el momento digamos las que están fallando estamos, hay comunidades que ni siquiera ha llegado la Misión, no están organizados seguimos en esa lucha no? En esa discriminación, no hay esa equidad de género. Donde hay lugares que hay mucho machismo donde el hombre no más se valora y las mujeres nada no? Y ni siquiera saben sus derechos las hermanas no? Nos falta harto todavía para llegar a eso y estamos en esa lucha no. Siempre no? (Informante B).

in her community at least know of their rights, and through using expressions like “we are oppressed and discriminated” she demonstrates her knowledge of lack of equality in her society, with a motivation to see changes in the current situation by stating that: “both men and women have to fight together to have equal opportunities”. She also underlines that through MAN-B’s projects; men and women can learn to work together. Informant H, on the other hand, is more hesitant and seems to sympathise more with the men, and explains how the topic of gender equality is often a source of conflict in her family:

For the men, it costs them a lot. In my family for example, with my daughter’s husband, it costs them a lot. Because they are so accustomed to the machismo [...]. For my dad too, it also costs him a lot, it is not the easiest thing [to change]. Because they [men] have this dominant character, which tells them that they are better than the women. Despite that my daughter has a strong will it is difficult for her husband to let her [participate in the projects] because it starts a conflict between them (Informant H).²¹

Informant H discloses that the men’s dominance is a source of conflict within her own family. In her understanding they are accustomed to the machismo culture and she explains that it is a challenge to change. However, she also encourages the women to take responsibility to make this change:

More than anything, women have to agree that we are equal [to men]. The most important criterions are that women agree that we [men and women] are equal. For many women, they are not used to that [way of thinking]. They believe that the man [should] always be the one who dominates. The man is the boss and in that same environment there exist a couple of women who agree [Informant H].²²

While the majority of the informants simply blamed men for the gender inequality in their society, Informant H points out that not only men are upholding the man-dominance traditions, she also holds women accountable for the lack of will to change these matters. However, it may be problematic to recognise whether the women agree or not. If the men are already dominating, it can be problematic to find out whether the women simply agree with the current situation, or if the women are put under pressure and are too scared to give any

²¹ Los hombres, les cuesta. En mi familia por ejemplo yo tengo mi yerno o sea de mi hija su esposo, le cuesta ellos están acostumbrados al machismo [...]. Mi papá es igual les cuesta, no es tan fácil la cosa, no. Ellos tienen ese carácter dominante, que decir yo soy más que la mujer, pese a que mi hija no se deja digamos con su esposo, pero ese es el problema y empieza ya el choque [...] Informante H).

²² Más que todo que las mujeres tengamos el mismo criterio de que somos iguales, porque muchas mujeres están acostumbradas a que no, que siempre el hombre es el que domina, el hombre es el jefe, el patrón, entonces en ese ambiente viven algunas señoras (Informante H).

opinions that might contradict with their husband. Informant H further describes what gender equality means to her:

I have this belief that we are all equal, we should not let ourselves be beaten and we should not let ourselves be yelled at. Because we are equal, equal in feelings, in reasoning, we are just the same as men. The only difference is that they are [physically] stronger than us [...]. We have the same rights and we have the same duties too. Well, of course we will always be “the weaker gender”. But even though we cannot compare ourselves with men’s [physical] strength, we are equal [in terms of] intelligence we [women] have even more intelligence sometimes (Informant H).²³

Informant H sees women as the “weaker gender”. It is interesting how she uses “gender” instead of “sex” in this context. I believe she is referring to the biological differences, and the right term would then be “sex”. However, when using “gender” it seems that the differences describe the distinction that the society makes in terms of feminine and masculine roles. In my understanding this was an issue that was revealed in some of the statements, the seeming “acceptance” that women were simply subordinate to men. If the women believe this to be true, how can they convince the men otherwise? Informant A explains that she did not even have permission to leave the house:

Before I did not have permission to leave the house. The men always said that the women would only gossip [if they left the house] so they said it was better if we did not go out [...] (Informant A).²⁴

Informant A gives an example of a typical reputation about what women would do when they gather. She points to her husband’s fear of gossip if the women gather in groups. The question that follows is why her husband uses this argument, is it simply gossip he is afraid of? Or is this an example of men’s fear of losing power, in the sense that women would turn against men if they gather in groups without the presence of their men? Informant I provides an example of what the women in her local society initiated:

Yesterday, we [a group of women] made a big *apthapi*²⁵, where [everyone] brought something, refreshments, fruit [...]. But then some men came and it went wrong... I was surprised, they took the

²³ Yo tengo ese pensamiento de que todos somos iguales y deberíamos... no deberíamos dejarnos pegar, no deberíamos dejarnos gritar, que tenemos... somos iguales, iguales en sentimientos, en razonamiento, igual que los varones, la única diferencia es que ellos son más fuertes que nosotros [...]. Tenemos los mismos derechos, los mismos deberes también, claro que siempre somos el sexo débil no? No podemos compararnos en cuanto a fuerza, pero en cuanto a inteligencia somos buenas o mejores a veces (Informante H).

²⁴ Antes yo no tenía acceso a salir de la casa porque siempre. Los hombres siempre decían esas mujeres van a chismear así es que tú vas a estar en la casa no me vas a salir [...] (Informante A).

meat and everything without this... well, they showed us little delicacy [they were rude], they [the men] did not bring anything to share. Only the women always know how to share (Informant I).²⁶

Informant I shares how the women arranged meetings and took initiative to having a communal lunch, where the concept is that everyone brings food and drinks to share. But later, when the men arrived, they spoiled the whole arrangement by taking what they wanted to eat and drink without leaving anything for the women to share. This sent a clear message to the women who arranged it: the men did not respect their effort and rather expected the women to provide for them. What did this leave the women thinking about themselves?

Another area where the women frequently recounted of gender inequality was related to work. It was expected that women took care of all the domestic work, including taking care of the children but also participating in their husband's work, which mostly involved agriculture. Though some of the women were happy to work outside the house, it rarely gave them any financial benefits, since it was expected that they would work to help their husbands. Moreover, only the husband would receive payment, like informant A shares:

Most of the time, I help him [my husband] and we work side by side, but he does not acknowledge [my work] and he does not tell me how much of the payment corresponds to me. The men do not value our [women's] work. When he [my husband] is hired, he makes his own budget without including my work [in it] (Informant A).²⁷

Informant A explains the inequality she experiences related to work, and how it was simply expected that she helped her husband, although the payment would only favour him. It was not difficult to sympathise with the women in this situation, as I witnessed their hard work and also understood that their work was not valued. The informants agreed about the inequalities related to work. What they especially emphasised was the lack of acknowledgment related to the heavy workload:

²⁵ “Apthapi is a tradition from the Andes, the word is in Quechua and means “pick of the harvest”, most commonly an expression used for a communal lunch (Educación Bolivia Online, 2013).

²⁶ Hemos hecho apthapi grande así todos, teníamos que traer tapeque así, refrescos [...]. Pero los hombres ni siquiera... ahí salió mal a... Ayer así me he sorprendido. Toda la carne se lo alzaban todo, sin este... o sea no tenían un poco de delicadeza porque no saben, nunca no han compartido ellos y nosotros mujeres sabemos como siempre compartimos nosotros ya sabemos pues (Informante I).

²⁷ Por más que tú le estés ayudando, estés trabajando cerca a él nunca siempre te dice el hombre si tú también has puesto tu mano de obra te corresponde esto, no, así que el trabajo de nosotros es a la nada, a lo así no más, el no más se cotiza su trabajo (Informante A).

It seems that women...we work as much as men, or even more. We wake up early [...] we work, we cook, we clean, we take care of the babies, and also we go with our husband to work (Informant D).²⁸

Personally, I consider women as ... well, we have more work than men, I could say more than triple. Because women have to take care of the family, they have to cook and they have to go to work, just like their husbands anyway. So, I mean women work more than the men. And the way I consider it, we work harder and women are stronger (Informant G).²⁹

Both Informant D and Informant G agree that the female workload upholds gender inequality, particularly with the heavy workload women in their local society face. Informant H also shares their view, and portrays how the current inequality related to work would be if women were in higher positions than men:

I cannot agree that if, let's say, if I or we [women] here were to be in a higher position than men. Through this example a good home would be not to command with authority [like men do] that: "this and this is what you have to do as a wife". No, we should rather talk to each other. So how can we all move forward? [...] Well, ever since I was young, I have had this criterion and this dream that [...] neither the male nor the female should be dominant, but rather that both make decisions together. We are not the same in character, but I think it is good that one gives in and allow oneself to be persuaded [...]. I have seen that in other families this can be a bit difficult, but my opinion is that if you love each other, then you can make the sacrifice (Informant H).³⁰

Informant H reflects on what the society would look like if the women were in charge. She shows what she has learned, in particular the value of having a dialogue where both men and women make sacrifices and make decisions together in order to cooperate. She states that there has to be one part that makes a sacrifice, and emphasises that when a couple loves one

²⁸ Parece que este... nosotros las mujeres trabajamos pues igual que los hombres o más todavía, nosotros lavamos temprano, algunas saben que es... como puedo decir... si pues trabajamos más [...] Trabajamos, cocinamos, lavamos, cuidamos a la wawa, igual también con el esposo vamos a trabajar (Informante D).

²⁹ Yo personalmente considero que las mujeres son... tienen más trabajo que los varones podría decir más que el triple. Porque tienen que atender a la familia, tienen que cocinar, luego tienen que... igual con el esposo va a trabajar, o sea las mujeres trabajan más yo diría que los varones. Yo me considero así que trabajamos más que los hombres y somos más fuertes las mujeres (Informante G).

³⁰ Sí, porque yo no estaría de acuerdo digamos que yo pucha sube arriba y el hombre ya abajo, o sea que nosotros seamos... estemos por encima de los hombres no. Por ejemplo yo veía de que un buen hogar digamos no es que el papá digamos ya diga esto vos vas a hacer como esposa, tú como hijo, así no, sino decir esposo y esposa como hacemos? Como vamos adelante? O sea, yo tenía ese criterio, desde jovencita he tenido ese criterio pero como le digo muchas cosas me lo he tragado y siempre he soñado con eso, he vivido con ese sueño y me parece a mí que no, no tendría que ni la mujer ser más dominante ni el varón ser más dominante sino que ambos tomen decisiones juntos, no es igual el carácter son diferentes pero como decía bueno este tiene que dar el brazo a torcer [...]. He visto yo en otras familias que es un poco difícil pero yo digo si se aman pueden hacer el sacrificio (Informante H).

another, it is about respecting each other and simply about having the will to help one another.

5.1.3 Violence

ENOUGH Bolivia!

Freedom from violence against women

Do not shut my voice

Do not turn off my smile.³¹

These words were shouted in the streets of La Paz by protesters marching for women's justice. Violence against women remains a serious problem in Bolivia (see chapter 2.1.2), and the fight to end violence against women was a frequently mentioned topic when I asked about the relation between men and women in the Caranavi districts. For this reason, I find it highly relevant to include this topic in the study, since gender violence is an obvious hinder for women to achieve empowerment. Also, the factors that inhibited empowerment were mostly related to the machismo culture, and the strong culture of violence. As Rowlands states: "violence is a factor that not only dominates women's lives but severely limits their choices" (Rowlands, 1997:46). The experiences the participants shared, revealed serious domestic violence:

My father was a machista [male chauvinist] he was a macho and he was always beating my mom. The same happened to me, my husband hit me until I started bleeding from my head. My husband has broken me (Informant D).³²

Informant D shares of gender-based violence, she tells that her father was violent with her mother, and when she got married herself, she experienced years of serious violence, which as a result led to eventually "breaking her". Several of the informants shared of violence in their family:

I have lived with my husband for ten years, and for ten years I have had this bad life, where I was totally discriminated against. I walked around with black eyes... and all this filled me with the strength to counteract that violence. In other words, I did justice for myself. In the end I took my husband hard

³¹ Bolivia YA! Libre de violencia contra las mujeres. No callen mi voz. No apaguen mi sonrisa.

³² Era machista mi padre [...] era machista todo pegado sabe estar mi mamá, igual a mí hasta me ha roto mi cabeza mi marido. Mi marido me ha roto (Informante D).

and said; "well, either I kill you or you kill me" [...]. And this has been my fight against my husband. Since that day we [her and some other women] grabbed him and beat him [...] we hurt ourselves badly as well [and this] has served as an experience. From that day and until now my husband never touches me. He does not hit me, he only argues with me (Informant B).³³

Informant B shares an experience that is quite dramatic. In order to have justice for herself she threatens to kill her husband. It illustrates how years of violence can result in an intense hatred and a desire to avenge herself, or in her words "it filled me with strength" and she made sure to have "justice for her own life". Taking into consideration her experiences and endless episodes of violence, one can understand the rising hatred. However, attacking him is a serious violation that could have taken her to jail. A relevant question to this story is: has her view changed after participating in courses from MAN-B, does she see other solutions now? Is it possible to change this strong culture of violence? These changes cannot happen only through participating in the courses, the women have to experience themselves that the information they receive can provide changes.

There are still machistas who beat their women, their wives. It continues like that, some of the machistas... they do not know anything about these courses and they are not participating. I always invite wives and husbands to participate together (Informant I).³⁴

Similar to Informant D and B, Informant I also stated that there is machismo and gender violence in her society. However, she points to the importance of not giving up to the inclusion of both women and men to courses, and for that reason she makes sure that both men and women are invited to courses. Instead of giving up the negative culture already influencing the society, she focuses on including the men, in order to end discrimination and violence against women in the local society. On the other hand, Informant B disclosed a situation where she eventually "took matters into her own hands", after a lifelong relationship of violence. She openly shared a clear example of a fight to gain respect from her husband,

³³ Así que he vivido 10 años con mi esposo, en 10 años hemos vivido mal totalmente discriminado, me pegaba, yo caminaba con los ojos verdes así [...] Entonces todo esto me ha llevado a que yo me cargue de fuerza para poder contrarrestar esa violencia, en otras palabras le puedo decir yo misma me hice la justicia no? Yo a mi esposo le agarré duro al final, bien te mato o me matas así, eso ha sido la lucha contra mi esposo. Desde el día que así nos hemos agarrado, nos hemos golpeado y nos hemos lastimado fatal, también nos ha servido de experiencia desde el día... desde ese día hasta hoy, hasta hoy día mi esposo nunca me toca, no me pega, sólo me riñe no? (Informante B).

³⁴ A veces hasta ahorita siguen los machistas hombres, que le pegan a su mujer, a sus maridos. Sigue ahí, unas cuantas personas que son machistas sigue ... no saben que es este porque no saben tanto a participar los hombres a estos cursos. Yo siempre sé decirle vamos a los cursos los dos (Informante I).

and the language she chose was “his language” of violence. Informant B shared this experience as an example of her process of empowerment, and how this event had changed her life and her marriage. Informant B makes it clear that she wants to balance the dominance of power. Or in her words “she took the law in her own hands”. Informant I’s initiative of inviting both men and women to the course can be seen as a crucial measure in order to avoid women finding themselves in Informant B’s situation, who eventually felt compelled to resort to violence.

During the interviews, several of the informants disclosed of violence within their closest relationships. However, in contrast to the solution Informant B took to end violence in her relationship, the majority of the informants quickly referred to the new national laws as the most important part of fighting for gender equality. There was one law in particular that all the women mentioned: Law 348 (see 2.1.1). Both Informant D and Informant A pointed to the Law 348, and how important it has been to know about their rights:

We have learned about Law 348 and about the political incident in Bolivia [...]. But often the women do not know of these laws, like for example in the rural areas, most of us do not know about these rights. But now, thanks to the Misión, we have had courses, and we can at least express ourselves more easily. We can talk in public, and claim what correspond to us by law. (Informant A).³⁵

More than anything, I have been taught about Law 348 [...] there are many men that ignore and fear this law (Informant D).³⁶

I think that [we need] more knowledge, because the laws we have are easy to ignore [...] and [many of us women] become oppressed because we do not know about our rights, or what laws that protect us [...]. If we all get more knowledge, I think it can change and we can have equality [...]. Because we have a law and it is in action. But there is still lack of information... it is unbalanced. I think that when we receive more information, the women will also start to go out and claim our rights (Informant C).³⁷

³⁵ Como ser la ley 348, hemos aprendido incidencia política [...]. Pero a veces como mujeres no las conocemos sino que. Por ejemplo en el área rural más que todo no conocemos nuestros derechos, pero ahora gracias a la Misión nos han traído capacitaciones y demás. Ahora ya por lo menos podemos expresarnos con facilidad y conversar. Hablar así en público, o sea ir a reclamar lo que nos corresponde (Informante A).

³⁶ Sí me ha enseñado... Más de ley 348 [...] Muchos hombres también no saben y ya tienen miedo a esa ley (Informante D).

³⁷ Bueno yo creo que más información tal vez, sí, informarse más, porque las leyes están hechas tal vez por desconocer estamos así nomás. Nos hacemos deprimir tanto tal vez porque no conocemos nuestros derechos o las leyes que nos amparan. Tal vez por eso estamos así y si todos llegamos a informarnos y yo creo que puede cambiar, podemos tener igualdad. Porque la ley está hecha, el gobierno ya ha sacado no? Pero por falta de

Informant C emphasises that there is a need for more information about the laws, similar the other informants also emphasised the need to learn about the laws that protect women from violence. As Informant A points out, knowledge makes it easier for them to “talk in public and claim what corresponds to us by law”. Similar to Informant C, both Informant A and D also pointed out the importance that the society “receives more information” about the laws. Furthermore, Informant C mention the governmental plans for rural areas:

They [the women] have to prepare themselves in every aspect, in being a good leader, or just [by being] a good person in the society. To practice good values and also be updated and read more, to [receive] training and search for information. All this will really help, because there are different kinds of sources, and some of them might be misleading. In our environment, especially in these last days there are so many women who are mistreated, there is femicides and so many things that we see, and so much that women go through and places where they should not be, right? (Informant C).³⁸

Informant C takes a different turn when speaking of women not only as victims, but giving women an ethical and moral responsibility. She speaks of “these last days” referring to a kind of religious apocalypse, summing up bad things happening to the environment, and also what she sees as increasing mistreatments of women. She mentions women going through difficulties, but also women putting themselves in bad situations. She continues to describe how this can change when they search for information and reflect on it:

But if we get training and practice in being a good person, I believe we can get there [...]. We are facing all these problems. And I would like that people look for more information, and do more reading and also to reflect on it (Informant C).³⁹

The significance of relational empowerment was also mentioned by Informant B, who emphasises that the women’s network, REDMUCAB, has been most important to her, because it has helped to organise women and to meet with other women, and it has also provided a place to learn about their rights:

información tal vez estamos todavía así no? Medio desequilibrados. Pero yo creo que cuando vamos a tener información, yo creo que no... las mujeres también ya van a salir no? a... a exigir sus derechos (Informante C).

³⁸ Que se preparen en todo aspecto, como en ser un buen líder, como ser una buena persona de sociedad. Que se practiquen los valores, o sea más que todo eso no? Como podemos ser una persona de bien, entonces para eso tienen que tal vez leer mucho, capacitarse, buscar información que realmente les ayude. Hay todo tipo de información ahora, incluso para desviarse. En nuestro entorno, especialmente en estos últimos tiempos muchas mujeres maltratadas, el feminicidio, o sea es tanta cosa que se ve, pero también es porque quizás muchas mujeres han ido no? Tras de esos lugares donde no debíamos estar no?

³⁹ Pero si nosotros nos capacitamos para ser una persona de bien no vamos a llegar yo creo a eso [...]. A estar en esos problemas digamos no? Entonces yo quisiera así que la gente busque información, haga mucha lectura y medite también no? (Informante C).

The most important here is that we have had the projects from MAN-B. They have created the network of women, called REDMUCAB, [in order] to counteract the violence in Caranavi and Alto Beni, and it [the network] has grown a little bigger [...]. We have also started with workshops, to be able to oppose violence [...]. If we really practice our rights, we don't denounce it. That's why we sometimes we are just silent, because we don't denounce it. How can they know our rights if we shut up? I say to my sisters: "You have these rights and you cannot suffer like this. You are suffering from psychological and economic abuse. We have to denounce it to the authorities. We are inducting the women, so they don't allow themselves to be crushed or [in other ways] are being reduced (Informant B).⁴⁰

In other words, Informant B states that the key to empowerment is organising group meetings, discussing issues and trying to solve them together. She gives an example of this:

So from this situation we have learned more about the Law 348, about violence of women and all that. We have learned something we did not know where our rights. Some of the women have been reflecting and others have also started to tell [their husbands]: "Look, brother, you do not have to do this, [because] what you are doing is wrong. If you do not like your wife or treat her well, then tell her that now you don't like her anymore and in a gentle way, separate from her, without hurting her". That's what I tell them [the women]. That is my experience – and I have survived (Informant B).⁴¹

Earlier in this chapter, Informant B shared her experiences of how she solved her conflict with her husband's violence and how the hatred she had against her husband ended in her attacking him. However, here she talks about growing leadership skills in this situation. She emphasises how women should communicate with their husbands and she indicates that separation is quite uncomplicated. However, in the context of the women in this interview, separation is particularly difficult because of the economic dependency many of the women have. A divorce can have serious consequences for the women's situation, not to mention for their children's welfare. Many of the informants had children, and they shared that their

⁴⁰ Lo importante también que ha sido de aquí del proyecto de la MAN – B. Ha sido en que hemos creado la REDMUCAB, para contrarrestar a la violencia entre Caranavi y Alto Beni. Entonces eso ha sido un poco más grande y en ese contexto también se ha llevado unos talleres muy grandes. Como no conocemos nuestros derechos ya pues uno se calla no? Diciendo hermana vos tienes este derecho tú no puedes sufrir así y estas mal sufriendo maltrato psicológico, maltrato económico, entonces denuncia no? A las autoridades también que tenemos, así estamos no? Están induciéndoles a las compañeras para que ellas no se dejen digamos aplastar por el marido o hacerse ver así pequeñitas porque ellas son de más valor (Informante B).

⁴¹ Entonces de esa parte ha sido la situación de entender, algunas han ido reflexionando, algunos yo también personal les he ido hablando: "Mira hermano tú no tienes que hacer, estás haciendo mal, si ella siempre no te agrada esta señora, no te cae, ya no te gusta dile mamita ya no te quiero, de buena forma hay que separarse sin estar lastimándose". Eso yo les digo. Y esa experiencia yo lo tengo - que he vivido (Informante B).

children were also suffering under the culture of violence. Informant I shared that through the courses from MAN-B she had learned not to mistreat her own children:

Earlier, I also mistreated my children. I used to hit them. But now, because of these courses I have been trained, [and now] I do not hit them anymore. I have learned that we have to talk to and advise [the children] and I did not know this before. So I asked my little son for forgiveness, because I had hit him earlier [...]. Through the courses we have learned a lot. We have been taught to value our families and to never mistreat our children, but rather talk to them and acknowledge them, right? (Informant I).⁴²

The informants all shared of MAN-B's projects resulting in an increased awareness of their own situations, and how to make improvements in their own family. This insight might be more powerful than anything else, because even though information and knowledge spreads, the changes have to come from within. MAN-B or other DAP are not able to provide help inside the individuals, but they can provide teachings that can serve as tools that can be used by each individual to stand up for themselves, share their thoughts and stand up for injustice within their own family or local society. Informant I further describes the change in awareness:

For women that have been mistreated by their husbands [...] those women know now that they should not be abused. This goes for both men and women, neither of them should mistreat each other. We can defend ourselves now, and we know that we should not mistreat anyone [...]. Let's say that a person... Well there is a friend of mine who is mistreated, she gets beaten by her husband, and I tell her that: "there are so many courses that we can go to and participate, and there you can listen and there you will realise... Let's go to these courses." But she is very humble and she puts up with everything. She says that she does not want to participate because she is so scared that her husband will beat her again [...] So I invited him many times. This woman is badly mistreated. She has also [told me] that her husband has raped their daughter. She has only told me that. And I have told her so many times; "I will help you, I will fight with you. They will take your husband to jail, and you will get out of this extreme situation". Everything turned out so wrong ... she did not want to go out, or [participate] in the courses, she did not want to go anywhere. She told me: "I want to separate and live without him" [...]. So, then she decided to separate from him, and now she is alone (Informant I).⁴³

⁴² Antes trataba mal a mis hijos igual, todo a golpes. No más ahora por los cursos ya como va a capacitarse a los cursos ahora ya no, ya no había sido pegar a las wawas (niños en Aymara) no es pegar nomás hay que hablar, así dice en curso no sabía yo, perdóname hijito si te he pegado antes pero no sabía. En cursos ha aprendido, hemos aprendido todo. Por ejemplo valorar a nuestras familias y también no éste... a nuestros hijos tampoco no tenemos que maltratarle, hablarle, reconocer digamos no ve? (Informante I).

⁴³ A las mujeres, tal vez más antes han sido maltratos con sus maridos [...]. Con sus éstés, pero ahora ya saben las mujeres que no hay que ser maltratado y hombres mujeres por igual. Nos podemos defender ya, ahora ya

This is also an example of relational empowerment and particularly it illustrates how power exists and is expressed in everyday relationships of people. Informant I shares a story about a friend who is facing serious problems within her own family. Informant I wants to take responsibility and tries to help her friend, and in her difficult situation, she shows compassion and care for her. Furthermore, she also takes actions and tries to invite her husband to the courses, too.

5.1.4 Self-esteem

As stated in chapter three, Rowlands theory further focuses on empowerment and how it must be seen as a “process whereby women and men gain self-coincidence so that they are able to participate in all aspects of development, including decision-making” (Momsen, 2004:14). When I asked the informants how they would characterise themselves and other women in their society, the topic of self-esteem was often brought up:

As a woman, I feel set aside and excluded. I am of no importance and have no attention from the younger people. [...] I feel like I am nothing and I no longer have any self-esteem. That’s how I feel (Informant D)-⁴⁴

The informants shared about lack of self-esteem and that they did not value themselves. This was closely linked to lack of respect from men in their closest family either husbands, fathers or other men in their local society. Rowlands writes about this sense of “being not only worthy of respect from others, but having a right to that respect” (Rowlands, 1997:13). Rowlands further claims that an essential part of the “core” is that the individual is to be able to move out of gender-assigned roles that her context and culture have given her. Informant E points this out:

sabemos que no hay que maltratar, hacerse maltratar con nadie [...]. Digamos a una persona sigue, hay una compañera está maltratada, le pega su esposo, yo le digo acaso no puedes ir al este [...]. Yo digo que: “Hay tantos cursos que hay podemos ir a participar, ahí puedes escuchar, ahí te vas a dar cuenta, iremos al curso”. Ella muy humilde es, todo se aguanta, no quiere ir tiene miedo, que le va a pegar vuelta su esposo. Miedo tiene que le va a pegar su esposo, no va al curso, le digo vamos no va y esa señora es bien maltratada. Incluso el padre de su hijo, de su hija ha sido violada con él. No le ha dicho nada y solamente ella me ha contado a mí. Anda, denúnciale tantas veces: “Te van a apoyar, te van a reñir. Le van a poner preso a tu esposo le digo, como vas a este... hasta ese extremo vas a llegar”. Está mal eso, todo cosas aguanta ella sola no más, en su corazón no más, no quiere salir tampoco, no quiere ir ni a los cursos, no quiere ir a ningún lado. “Prefiero separarme dice y no vivir con él” [...] Se ha separado. Ahora esta ella solo no mas (Informante I).

⁴⁴ Yo misma me siento que me ralean así como mujer, no me dan ahora importancia los jóvenes [...] Ya no me estimo yo misma, así me siento (Informante D).

Because I have more support from my husband we understand each other better. When we have equality, [it results] in better understanding, because if one is submissive, one will not be happy [...]. This goes for the children as well. Self-esteem is important for women, and also for the children (Informant E).⁴⁵

As Informant E explain here, self-esteem is crucial for women. Self-esteem and empowerment could be said to go hand-in-hand. Without self-esteem it is difficult to achieve empowerment, and when you are empowered, you also have an increased self-esteem. Though many of my informants shared of their roles as women being mostly influenced of fear, violence and being victims of the machismo culture, there were informants who also shared of an increase in both self-esteem and self-confidence. It seemed to be closely related to having more knowledge of their own rights, which further gave a motivation to make changes in their own families and local societies:

I look at myself differently now. Before we didn't care for the organisations, because we had this idea that the meetings were only for men, but now we can go and we can participate [...]. So, when my dad did not have the time, I went to the meeting. Before I kept quiet and I was left there, no one knew my ideas, because I would think that it was better if I did not say anything. But now I speak out and I do not have that fear of saying: "this could be done this way, or this could be done like this". I do not have that fear, you know? Before I was there only making the seat warm, but now I can rise up and I can say things (Informant H).⁴⁶

Informant H is sharing about major changes in her participation in meetings and raising her voice, instead of only participating and "making the seat warm" as she put it. Though I did not have the ability to observe these changes first-hand, this analysis is based on what my informants shared about the changes they experienced and I choose to trust that they were honest about their personal growth. The changes most of the women referred to were that they now had a different view on themselves that was related to their value as women. However, it was often mentioned how challenging it was to change the man-dominant

⁴⁵ Porque tengo más apoyo de mi esposo y más me entiendo con él. Para que haya igualdad, mejor entendimiento, sí, porque si uno está sometida no está feliz [...]. Los hijos también se autoestima por ejemplo para las mujeres es bien importante (Informante E).

⁴⁶ Ahora se ve diferente. Como le decía inclusive nosotros mismos no dábamos mucha importancia a lo que son las organizaciones porque teníamos el criterio de que a la reunión del sindicato los varones siempre tienen que ir. En cambio ahora nosotras podemos ir [...]. Ya mi papá no tenía tiempo ya yo iba a la reunión, pero hablaba uno, el otro planteaba, yo decía pero yo tengo este pensamiento así puede ser, pero no lo decía. Yo me callaba y me quedaba ahí quien sabe mi idea hubiera sido mejor a lo que todo lo que planteaba. Pero ahora yo puedo decirlo, o sea, ya no tengo ese miedo de decir: "Pero esto podría ser de esta forma, o este otro podríamos hacerlo así". Ya no tengo ese temor, no ve? De decir, antes sí, yo iba para calentar el asiento nomás. Ahora no, puedo plantear, puedo decir las cosas (Informante H).

culture, and they were aware that changes could not happen overnight. Despite this, they were mostly positive and stayed focused on the important changes that had already happened in their circumstances. Many of the women explained that their ability to formulate and express their own ideas and meanings had increased through participation in the programs. The practice they had in the meetings with other women was crucial for this growth:

What I have learned from the Misión is the orientation on how to live. They have taught us to love ourselves as women... Before it was like we were the worst things in our homes, but now we value ourselves as women. The Misión has taught us about empowerment, both to empower others and ourselves. We have been trained and now we can easily participate in meetings, because earlier if a woman spoke, she was not taken seriously and they laughed at her, but now the men have to listen. Because our law says so, they will have to listen to us, if not it is discrimination (Informant A).⁴⁷

Informant A shares how women's situation has changed, and how she is now taking an active role. Particularly the statement she makes towards the end: "they will have to listen to us, if not it is discrimination" demonstrates a great ability to express her opinions firmly. The upcoming part of the analysis will go further into the process of empowerment experienced by the informants in this research.

5.2 The empowerment process

The last subchapter provided an insight into the experiences the women had related to their expected female role as wives and mothers in their local society. The experiences presented were especially related to fear, violence, machismo and lack of self-esteem. In this subchapter, I will present the changes the women shared that are related to their experiences after participating in the courses. In other words, I will examine the women's empowerment process. This will be done with an emphasis on Vilby's definition of empowerment, which is: "strengthening women's ability to solve their own problems, through giving them a stronger role in the society" (Vilby, 2006:234). There are particularly two questions I will investigate:

1. Which dimensions of empowerment do the informants share of?
2. What does this say about their experience of the empowerment process?

⁴⁷ Para mí lo que significa haber aprendido todo lo que la Misión nos ha enseñado, más que todo para orientarnos como vivir. Nos ha enseñado querernos como mujeres... Más antes me parece que éramos lo peor que había en la casa, pero ahora ya nos valoramos como mujeres. También nos ha enseñado la Misión a empoderarnos como mujeres, y a capacitarse. Y nos ha capacitado, ya ahora por lo menos ya podemos participar en las reuniones con facilidad, porque más antes no pues, que habla esa mujer que se calle basta. Pero ahora ya no, ahora ya nos tienen que escuchar. Porque nuestra ley dice eso, que nos tienen que escuchar y punto sino ya es discriminación (Informante A).

In the interviews, the women categorised certain topics related to their personal empowerment process. The topics were: leadership, practical skills and contribution to the economy. These topics include both an individual and collective empowerment. Individual empowerment influences collective empowerment and vice versa, like Adams states: “empowerment is not only a source to make changes in your own life, but through personal empowerment that will benefit the society as well” (Adams, 2008:8).

5.2.1 Leadership

In the beginning of this chapter, the informants shared of fear and lack of self-esteem as the major obstacles to empowerment, but Informant E shares how there has been a transition from a state of fear to participation:

Before all [the women] stayed inside the house, but now that we know our rights, we have learned to have an opinion and to participate. Now with everything we have learned about our rights, we now know more about our rights, and also to have opinions and we participate in meetings. Before that made us scared, we were not prepared to have positions and then... we have learned to occupy different positions, like positions in the federation, or leading neighbourhood meetings and gathering groups of women (Informant E).⁴⁸

Informant E regarded the knowledge of women’s rights as important to her. When one can point at rights and laws that are protecting women, it also helps the “undoing of negative social constructions, so that people come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and influence decisions” (Rowlands, 1997:14). By stating that “we have learned to occupy different positions”, Informant E refers to a few of the women from her local community who have left their local society and now have positions in the federation. This was frequently referred to as an encouraging factor for the informants:

Lately many women are standing out as leaders. So that's a parameter that shows that women are being supported ideologically too, which is equipping them [...]. More than anything, I feel that women are gaining more importance, that they play a very important role in the society. Before it was ... well, the

⁴⁸ Antes todas estábamos en la casa, pero luego ya con los derechos hemos aprendido a opinar, participar. Llevar cargos también, porque antes daba miedo, no estábamos preparados para ocupar un cargo.. Ya con los derechos hemos aprendido a opinar, participar y llevar cargos también. Porque antes daba miedo, no estábamos preparados para ocupar un cargo y luego ya todos tenemos que... hemos aprendido entonces a ocupar cargos diferentes, sí, cargos en la federación, en la junta de vecinos, a hacer grupo de señoras, a hacer una directiva (Informante E).

woman stayed in the kitchen and washed clothes, or they went to help their husband in the chaco⁴⁹. But not anymore, now it is almost even between the genders. Both men and women can make decisions and have opinions. Earlier, in meetings for example, when a woman raised her hand, then men would say: “Wow, a woman is going to talk” [Ironically]” and then they would “boo” at her. But not now, now there is this respect. I think women now have earned the respect within the society (Informant H).⁵⁰

Informant H first shares what it was like for women to be part of the meetings, with the men “booing” whenever a woman expressed her opinions out loud. This is no doubt discouraging and discriminating. However, she explains how this is changing, and that women nowadays are met with respect. Both Informant E and Informant H are clearly encouraged by seeing other women “standing out as leaders”. To have role models was mentioned as a great help to find motivation and strength to continue fighting for change:

For example, now I am the leader of the neighbourhood committee here in my community [...] we have gained so much from the training and the directions we have received. It is easier to learn from an institution [MAN-B] that also focus on how to understand your husband, because even though your husband might be a good leader it can be difficult to learn from him [...]. The way we have learned about leadership from MAN-B has been easier to understand, than [the teachings] from our local leaders. We have learned how to create a group and how to manage it, even though we have small groups, we will always need to integrate [...]. Before a younger person who lacked knowledge on leadership could not easily stand in front of a group of older men with more life experience. But now those young leaders feel prepared and ready to participate inside our local organisation (Informant C).⁵¹

⁴⁹ Chaco means a patch of land (related to agriculture).

⁵⁰ Ahora últimamente muchas mujeres ya se están destacando. Entonces eso es un parámetro digamos de ver que se está apoyando a la mujer de manera ideológica también, o sea capacitarles [...]. Más que todo yo siento que se da más importancia a la mujer, que juega un rol bien importante en la sociedad, porque antes era... bueno la mujer de la cocina, de lavar la ropa, de lavar servicio, hasta ahí. Ya ir a ayudar al esposo al chaco, pero ahora ya no, ya hay un criterio casi uniforme entre ambos. De tanto hombre y mujer son los que pueden tomar decisiones y opiniones también. En las reuniones ya la mujer levanta la mano. Antes no pucha si va a hablar la mujer los hombres: “buuu”, le van a abuchear. Pero ahora no, hay ya ese respeto, o sea las mujeres creo que nos hemos ganado el respeto dentro de la sociedad. (Informante H).

⁵¹ Ahora por ejemplo yo estoy como junta de vecinos, soy la presidenta de la junta de vecinos de aquí de mi comunidad. [...] Entonces nos ha servido mucho las capacitaciones, las orientaciones que hemos recibido no? porque es más fácil aprenderlo de una institución que te trae entendidos en eso que aprender del esposo, por más que el esposo sea un buen líder o un buen... que sepa todo pero es difícil a veces aprender de él no? o decir que nos enseñe [...]. Cómo llevar una organización, por más mínimo que sea siempre necesita tener ese liderazgo de cómo integrar más a las mujeres. [...] O aún más todavía cuando es una población con varones o con personas de más edad que tienen más experiencia y al frente hay una persona joven que no tiene quizás mucha experiencia pero que está ahí adelante. Entonces hay pero formas de llevar esto adelante, entonces en ese tema nosotros hemos recibido esas orientaciones y creo que estamos no más ya listos no? Para participar dentro de la organizaciones (Informante C).

Informant C describes how leadership has automatically been men's domain, which made it difficult for younger people to participate in meetings. Now, this is changing because of leadership courses from MAN-B, where she explains how younger people are now participating and influencing their local organisations. This "movement" of younger people participating is an example of how the traditional roles are starting to change, which might influence other traditions as well. Although she does not mention any gender, it might be reasonable to think that either way, the younger generation might be more open to changes to promote gender equality?

Further, I wanted to find out how the experienced empowerment affected close relationships. As Rowlands points out, empowerment within close relationships is seen to depend on "developing the skills of negotiation and communication" (Rowlands, 1997:124). One example is skills that involve defending rights within a relationship. When I asked about women's rights, the informants often spoke of a lack of equality within the families. The nature of machismo was deep-rooted and made it difficult for the women to change the expected roles in their homes, or even have a say in decisions concerning anything outside the household. Some of the women shared that through participating in the courses from MAN-B there had been changes in their relationships with their husbands and families. These women shared that the leadership skills they learned also helped them in their personal life, for instance through stating their own opinions, as Informant B describes:

If there is any small mistake he [her husband] tells me you should do like this and [vice versa]. So now we respect each other. But earlier with the continuous physical, economic and psychological violence it made me a different person, and it charged me with energy and strength. But now that I am a leader... I realise that I have to support other women here [...] and when we start to talk, the sisters tell me what has happened to them, and I tell them I have suffered in the same way. And then I tell them that we have to go to the authorities or go their husbands and say: "I have my rights and you cannot hit me like this. In the same way, you [the husband] have your rights. We both have rights" (Informant B).⁵²

⁵² Si algún errorcito hay me dice esto deberías hacer así.. Entonces nos respetamos ambos. Pero más antes era continuo la violencia física que él me hacía mi persona. y eso me carga de energía, de fuerza y yo también pensaba que yo no más era la que sufría violencia física, económica, psicológico, todo eso. Pero me doy cuenta de que ahora que soy líder... voy apoyando a otras compañeras [...] empezamos a hablar, a conversar, las hermanas sacan, me dicen esto me está pasando, yo también he sufrido de la misma manera le digo, entonces que podemos hacer, anda a las autoridades o bien dile a tu esposo: "Yo tengo mis derechos que tu no me puedes pegar así. Estos habían sido mis derechos. También él tiene sus derechos no sólo también las mujeres tenemos, ambos tenemos" (Informante B).

5.2.2 Practical skills and contribution to the economy

Thanks to MAN-B I can now contribute to the economy. Before I was discriminated and I thought I was worth nothing. My husband told me that as a woman I was worth nothing, and repeatedly told me I did not contribute to the economy [of the household], but now, thanks to MAN-B, also women get a chance to work. I work with handcrafts to have some income. The only thing I miss is [to have chance] to study (Informant B).⁵³

A direct encouraging factor for some of the women was income-generating projects. Through learning new skills such as literacy skills, learning to read and write, basic skills on a computer and also practical skills in handcrafts, their self-confidence increased. In particular, when the skills resulted in products that could be sold and gave income, it was described as an important source to empowerment. Through the projects, the women shared that the teachings had strengthened their identities as women, which led to respect from their families and other people in their local society. They shared of how they now experienced to have greater value. In addition, they saw themselves as more than “just” a mother and housewife. A point shared by Rowlands on this matter, is that several DAP have effects of strengthening the identity of the individual, apart from her role as housewife and mother. In this way, it can help women to not only focus on the needs of others, but also on her own needs. Rowlands states that “this makes it easier for the individual to generate ideas and hold opinions that differ from those of other people, which is a necessary ability for exercising power” (Rowlands, 1997:113-114).

According to the HDR from 2016 “Inequalities in income influence inequalities in other dimensions of well-being and vice versa” (UNDP-HDR, 2016). To have an income is not just a matter of economy, it is also a matter of well-being and is crucial in order to establish gender equality. Inequality related to work and income is a reality for many women and it brings more understanding to why several of the informants linked empowerment directly to learning practical skills and generating an income. Informant A describes what it has meant for her:

⁵³ Gracias a la MAN-B también puedo generar economía. Antes yo misma me discriminaba, yo pensé que no valía nada. Mi esposo mismo me discriminaba, que no valíamos como mujer nada, que yo no aportaba economía. Pero ahora, gracias a la MAN-B soy una mujer que sí puedo trabajar. Trabajando en las artesanías puedo generar economía. Lo único que me falta es ahorita es estudiar (Informante B).

Well for me, this is a pride as a woman. Because of what I have learned to produce, I can generate some income. [Though it] is not much, income is income, right? [...]. For me the Misión has helped me and my family a lot [...] it has brought us teachings, which have made us aware [of what we achieve] as women. Before, for example, our husbands [could] ask, “What are you worth? What do you do at home?” They did not even acknowledge our work at home. We [were accused] of wasting all the [household] money and we were not able to produce money [ourselves] but now it is different, things [responsibility] are changing at home. So, we are practicing the principal to complement each other (Informant A).⁵⁴

Informant A shared about the inequalities she experiences and how not having an income makes her husband question her value. On the other hand, Informant E explains that labour negotiations treat women with indifference:

I feel that our [women’s] work is worth nothing. The labour negotiation is treating women with indifference. We do not negotiate about the payment, and they [the men] just expect that we will be working for them. There is a lack of communication about how much of [the payment] correspond to us. He [her husband] just makes a budget for his own work. But now, among us women we produce and sell, and by that we are saying [to the men]: “I also have income” (Informant B).⁵⁵

The example Informant B shares presents issues on two levels, first how the labour negotiations treats women with indifference, second how she lacks communication with her husband and that he expects her to help him, and though she helps him, he only makes a budget for his own work. However, through learning new skills and making handcrafts to sell, she is given an opportunity to have her own income, which both makes a difference in her self-esteem and yields increased respect from her husband. Informant A has a similar experience of change after learning practical skills:

If you do not have a title, or at least high school here, you are nothing. You cannot work anywhere. But thanks to these courses to make handcrafts, we can at least sell these [products] to earn a little money. I do this in order to not be left behind [from other women]. With the trainings for women [from MAN-

⁵⁴ Bueno para mí eso es un orgullo como mujer. Porque genero aunque no mucho pero genero ingresos no? [...] A mí la Misión me ha ayudado mucho y es parte de mi familia no? Porque nos ha traído capacitaciones, nos ha hecho despertar como mujeres. O sea más antes los maridos nos decían: “Para qué ustedes sirven? Que haces en la casa?”. Si ni siquiera facilito gastas el dinero, si ni siquiera vos sabes que es ganar, pero ahora ya no, ahora ya está cambiando las cosas en la casa, ya estamos no, practicando el principio tal vez de la complementariedad (Informante A).

⁵⁵ Porque a veces el hombre no siempre te valora. Por más que tú le estés ayudando, estés trabajando cerca a él nunca te dice el hombre, si tú también has puesto tu mano de obra te corresponde esto. Así que el trabajo de nosotros es a la nada. A lo así no más, él no más se cotiza su trabajo. Mientras nosotros como mujeres hacemos esto y nos vendemos, decimos “ya yo también genero ingreso” (Informante B).

B] we feel able to do things. As well, I feel able to give my opinions easily and firmly in decision-making. I have found this very interesting, before my future plan was to study law. Now I know that it might not be possible, but [despite this] we have to continue [getting more knowledge]. It would not be good for me to be “there” left behind and only serve in my home, to serve just to serve, well that’s my theory right now. Before I might have thought otherwise, but now that I can also have a little [income] my husband cannot tell me that; “You don’t do anything and I just give you money”. But now, at least I contribute with something, though it is not much, it is something (Informant A).⁵⁶

Informant A illustrates how producing handcrafts and selling them, provides her with a sense of achievement. She underlines that the ability to earn some money mobilises strength and motivation more than anything else, as well as giving her opportunities. To have an income is essential to gain respect. She also shares her dream to study law, but that she does not think it is possible. Despite this, she finds support in knowing that because she has learned to make handcrafts, which she can sell, has changed her daily life. Because of that, she is no longer bound to stay inside the house preparing food and cleaning. She seems very pleased with having more opportunities, which illustrates how important this sense of achievement can be. Learning new skills can be a crucial first-step, particularly when it results in a visible contribution to their economy. For her, these practical skills have taught her that she has value. Informant I shares of a similar experience of achievement:

We have learned to defend ourselves as women, and we have learned it all. But earlier, women were set in a lower position and our husbands did not value us. When the people were gathered together in reunions [...] the men was shouting: “what can women tell us? They don’t do anything, they should be in the corner”. So that’s what the men used to say. But now, through these courses, we are getting knowledge, thanks to courses from the MAN-B [...]. Through the MAN-B we have learned to value our work. Like for example we are working with this jipijapa and making coconuts handcrafts [...]. We have learned these things in order to make a difference, and so we are able to help our families, [especially because] we have an income source. We can sell it, and earn a little money (Informant I).⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Si aquí no tienes tu título por lo menos de bachiller aquí tú no eres nadie. En ningún lugar puedes trabajar, pero gracias también a estas cositas que nos ha traído, artesanías, por lo menos ya eso lo vendemos y tenemos algo de dinero. Y eso, por no quedarme y más que todo. Cuando la Misión trajo estas capacitaciones para las mujeres donde nos capacitamos nosotros para poder. En algún lugar opinar con facilidad, opinar con firmeza o con decisiones. Me ha interesado mucho porque yo en un futuro había pensado estudiar derecho. Pero no ha sido quizás... o sea no ha sido quizás posible pero aún así hay que seguir. No sería para mí bueno quedarse ahí nomás...ser solamente servir en la casa y punto, o sea servir para servir, eso no es de mí mi teoría ahora. Antes quizás pensaba de otra forma, pero ahora ya no, ahora yo también puedo dar un poquito en mi casa, no solamente digamos que me diga el marido: “tú no haces nada yo te doy plata”. Yo por lo menos algo ya gano, no será mucho pero algo (Informante A).

⁵⁷ Hemos aprendido a defendernos como mujeres, todo hemos aprendido. Ahora más antes mujeres todo bajonado éramos, no nos valoraban nuestros maridos mismos. La gente mismo en reunión, los hombres “mujeres no saben nada, que tiene que hablar la mujer, tiene que estar en un rincón”. Así nos saben decir los

Informant A and Informant I mention similar changes. Informant I shared that women did not have any value and the men ignored and underestimated them, frequently telling them that they had no value. But now, learning practical skills and having an income has given her the respect needed. Informant B explains this process of change more closely:

We have learned to weave jipijapa⁵⁸ and coconut carving, which has been a part of our handicrafts courses. But not only that... as a craftsman you are a part of... let's say, we are a part of something that is about valuing our self, like for example we had teaching about how to prevent abuse and violence of women. We did not know about our rights, and felt very reduced. We had workshops during the day, and then at night we had leadership courses. But we were too shy to talk, you know? - Because we were afraid of talking. However, when we had the workshops and went there, we could move forward and that changed our attitude too. We have become leaders, we have begun to speak and we have started to lose that fear, and share of what we have learned. We have learned to negotiate with public offices [...]. Well, and all this have strengthened us as women, and this [achievement] has given positive results not only for women, but for men too (Informant B).⁵⁹

Informant B describes her sense of achievements through learning practical skills, and by participating in leadership courses. Through more knowledge she feels empowered, and states how she and other women begin to lose their fears, which provides them with strength to negotiate with public offices. This is a new role for women in her society, and in her opinion, this might even strengthen the relationship between men and women, because it has already given positive results. It has made a big difference to have a concept of “women’s rights”, knowledge of what those rights might consist of, and a perception of inequalities in

hombres. Ahora mediante de esos cursos siempre nos hemos capacitado, por esas capacitaciones gracias a Misión Alianza [...]. Mediante de ellos hemos aprendido a valorar así nuestro trabajo, a veces por ejemplo de estamos trabajando con jipijapa digamos de tallados de mono, todo eso [...]. Hemos aprendido para ayudar un poco, sobresalir, para ayudar a nuestra familia, tenemos ya de donde este... vender para ayudar a nuestra familia, vendemos y tenemos ya platita (Informante I).

⁵⁸A palm like South American plant with leaves used especially to make Panama hats (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

⁵⁹Otro ha sido el que nos ha enseñado el trenzado en jipijapa, también el tallado en coco y no solo eso, eso ha sido en la parte digamos de manualidades así... Como artesana trabajas en la parte de lo que son... como ser sobre el valorarse de nosotros mismos no ve. Por ejemplo eso de la violencia contra la mujer todo eso. Hemos ido pasando unos talleres que nosotros mismos no conocíamos que eran nuestros derechos, así a veces nosotros nos sentíamos muy pequeños, muy bajos. Hemos ido también en ese aspecto yendo pasando los talleres. A veces pasábamos en el día esto y en la noche pasábamos lo que es cursos de liderazgo. Que también éramos tímidas para hablar, no? - Por eso teníamos miedo. Mientras que hemos pasado los talleres, hemos ido avanzando y hemos ido también cambiando nuestra actitud. Hemos sido líderes, hemos empezado a hablar, hemos ido perdiendo el miedo y digamos nos han enseñado también. Hay que ser insistente en el municipio que, tenemos que tocar la puerta del municipio [...]. Bueno, y todo eso nos ha ido fortaleciendo como mujeres y no solo a mujeres también a hombres (Informante B).

relationships between people as wrong. Cultural factors and economic dependency (most men control the income and other resources in the household) is some challenges to achieve empowerment in close relationships. Rowlands calls this “internalized oppression, which is a major obstacle to empowerment, reinforcing any actual dependency” (Rowlands, 1997:122). However, these cultural factors are challenged when the women can have income and have knowledge about their rights. For women who have achieved positive changes in their personal relationships, whether with husbands or other close relatives, the changes included an increased control over their personal circumstances, such as income, use of time, and ability to attend meetings. The informants also described an increase in respect from others. Informant G also provides an example of how practical work will benefit both men and women, and that the goal should be that men and women work together:

I make him or her realise, both men and women [...]. There is always a price to pay, but we always have to value both male and female, because the two should always participate, either working in agriculture, the workshops or in meetings, in everything! So both [genders] should move forward and support each other, in that way we can move ahead and also improve our economy (Informant G)⁶⁰.

In sum, practical education such as learning to make handicrafts can contribute to knowledge about local resources (both jipijapa and coconut are examples of products the women used in handicrafts) and can further expand the farming industry, which are elements in the development in their local society. Learning practical skills can also indicate empowerment because the increased knowledge makes the person a resource in the society. Furthermore, when women take a more active role in economic activities and in cooperating with others in their community, there is also a “circular feedback effects, in that the acquisition of new skills reinforces the development of self-confidence and self-esteem” (Rowlands, 1997:122).

5.2.3 Personal and collective empowerment

As presented in the theory chapter, “empowerment is a process that involves some degree of personal development, but that this is not sufficient; and that it involves moving from insight to action” (Rowlands, 1995:103). I will now present the experiences that the informants shared both at a personal and a collective level:

⁶⁰ Bueno yo les hago un poco recapacitar no, más que todo a los varones, también a las mujeres. Ambos yo diría para... a veces nos cuesta siempre pero siempre hay que poner de nuestra parte también para valorarnos ambos tanto varón y mujer y siempre participando también los dos, tanto en la... en el cultivo, ya sea en los talleres, reuniones. En todo! Los dos siempre deben ir adelante apoyarse ambos y así vamos a salir adelante también para mejorar nuestra economía (Informante G).

For me, personally I feel free. How can I tell you this ... I do not know how to explain it. I could not tell you [on behalf] of everyone else, but for me personally I have always identified myself as free, and I never let myself be oppressed by... my husband (Informant J).⁶¹

One of the points that several of the women told of, was that being oppressed by men in close relationships was not a passive role. It was rather an active role, which means that it cannot solely be men's "fault" it might also involve women upholding this position as "the inferior gender". Informant J shares this point through saying "I never let myself be oppressed by my husband". In this sense, she shows that she takes an active role in the existing gender inequality. She chooses not to be passive and decides that she will demonstrate to her husband that she is free and independent. Personal empowerment is demonstrated with a marked difference and it speaks of a change in a person's life-influencing choices: in this matter women are particularly vulnerable. Central to this process of personal change, is the further process that can lead to collective empowerment:

I have enjoyed [MAN-B's projects] very much and especially how it has given us a women network. Earlier, women have been very discriminated, and [MAN-B] have made me open up my eyes (Informant D).⁶²

Informant D marks how establishing a network has been important for her. Having a network was an encouragement shared by several of the women, particularly because it gave them an opportunity to get out of the individual isolation of their homes and helped them find support in a network of women in the same situation. Informant D states "it made me open up my eyes". Further, it was mentioned that the opportunity to share problems with other women was important. Informant E provides evidence of collective empowerment, as she refers to the reunions and how they could learn from each other during these meetings:

We have learned a lot. Before we were shy and we did not talk much. Now with the courses we have all learned many things. Like for example, to be more social, to participate more, and also to encourage one another. That's the way it is now. Earlier, we were not very interested, but we did not only get help to make handcrafts, but also support to our production. And even more important to have both have

⁶¹ Yo personalmente o sea me siento libre. Como te puedo decir... No sé cómo explicar. No podría decirte de todas pero personalmente yo siempre me he identificado que soy libre, nunca me he hecho oprimir con el... con mi esposo. (Informante J).

⁶² A mí la MAN-B me ha gustado mucho como se había organizado esa REDMUCAB. Pero con nosotros estábamos muy discriminados las mujeres en esa parte, a mí me ha hecho abrir los ojos (Informante D).

social competence [in the public sphere] and being leaders as women [...]. These teachings for us, and for the woman more than anyone else, will make us promoters of justice, you see? (Informant E).⁶³

Here, informant E talks about the teachings from MAN-B as a social involvement to promote justice in their society. However, she mentions that they are in need of support to their production and further projects. At the same time, she states that the women are the key players. When women gain more knowledge and competence through learning skills, such as leadership, it can influence a whole group of people, and together they can promote justice. To mobilise these forces, one might have to start with smaller projects, and though it was frequently stated that there was a lack of economic support for it, it was emphasised that these projects can influence the greater society:

Well personally I do value myself, I know myself and I say [to myself] that I am an important woman. Sometimes I give of my time to MAN-B, in order to discover new markets, and I encourage others to participate, right? We have already climbed some steps, but still there are always more sisters that should follow us [...] (Informant B).⁶⁴

Informant B pinpoints the importance of developing a self-understanding and self-worth. She speaks like a leader in the sense that she focuses on encouraging more women. Through knowledge it is possible to not only learn how to make handcrafts, but also where to sell them. Informant C emphasises the benefits of gathering in groups:

We have had nice experiences [...] In the women's groups we have shared some of the problems that we can face. Sometimes with our problems one can feel alone - and one suffers alone, but when we are in a group we can...rely on each other. One of us can say: "look I have this problem, what can I do?" Then we can share the pain she's carrying, and we can encourage her... That's the part I really like. I think a lot of my friends feel that way too. Because when one suffers, she does not know who she can share it with, but when we get together she can be open with us. So, we can trust in each other. To have this confidence between us, being able to share and analyse together, and [we can give each other

⁶³ Hemos aprendido mucho pues. Antes éramos tímidas, no hablábamos mucho. Ahora con los cursos todo hemos aprendido ya. Por ejemplo a ser más sociables, participamos más, animamos a las señoras también. Sí, ya así es. Más antes había pero nosotros no hemos tomado mucho interés, porque no solamente ha apoyado en la artesanía, sino apoyo a la producción también. Si en la gestión social, en el aspecto liderazgo también de las mujeres [...]. La información del Misión para nosotros, para las mujeres más que todo, ahora que va haber promotoras de justicia, no ve? (Informante E).

⁶⁴ Bueno yo a si personalmente me aprecio, me conozco, digo soy una mujer importante. A veces doy de mi tiempo para la organización, para poder buscar mercados y si hay algunos talleres también a las compañeras a las hermanas tenemos que ir a participar ya por lo menos yo digo no? Ya hemos subido un peldaño entiendo pero yo quiero que las otras hermanas me sigan (Informante B).

advice] if there are sources in laws that can show us how to handle a situation. And also, we have a law that can protect us, so we can help each other (Informant C).⁶⁵

Informant C further highlights the emotional attachment within the women's groups, and how they can support and encourage one another. She is not only talking of helping one another in production or giving practical help with the work, but also giving emotional help to each other. Knowing that other women are in the same situation, and being able to share knowledge about the rights, laws and other important issues, is a great support in personal challenges they face, which can further lead to changes with a collective impact:

When it comes to this training, we need a push to be able to move forward. Because sometimes it is as if we are swimming in a whirlpool, where we are spinning round and are being drawn down. But through this training we have someone to push us, and that can support us [...]. That is what I have experienced from our friends from the MAN-B, and they are supporting with raw materials, in order to move a step forward to get away from our troubles. For me that would be the main thing, to get a small push to be able to move even further ahead (Informant H).⁶⁶

Informant H gives a description of the current situation as "swimming in a whirlpool", where they are just spinning round and are eventually drawn down. This interpretation might signify that as women they can be overloaded with problems in their personal life, but that MAN-B provides the push needed to step forward. She gives the example of provision of tools to make handicrafts, but seems to have a belief that this is only the first step of the movement towards a better life. On the other hand, Informant F highlights that respect is the key to achieving gender equality, because it gives an approval that can help gain trust:

⁶⁵ Hemos tenido bonitas experiencias. Hemos tenido grupos de señoras, hemos compartido más quizás algunos problemas que podemos enfrentar así en forma. Uno solo a veces con sus problemas se está sola y sufre digamos sola, pero cuando ya somos un grupo podemos tener confianza. Siempre hay una que dice: "mira yo tengo este problema, como puedo hacer?". Entonces tratamos de ayudarnos, tal vez compartimos incluso el dolor que ella está llevando, le animamos...y esa parte a mí me gusta mucho. Yo creo que también muchas compañeras se sienten así. Porque uno solo a veces sufre no sabe a quién decir, pero cuando ya nos juntamos cada vez ya nace. Ese de tener confianza entre nosotros, poder compartir, analizar, y si ahora por ejemplo con las leyes que nos indica, entonces eso no puede ser, podemos acudir allá, mira, hay una ley que nos protege (Informante C).

⁶⁶ Lo que es capacitación, un empuje para poder salir adelante. Porque a veces es como si estuviéramos nadando así en un remanso, en un remolino, ahí estamos dando vueltas. Pero esto de la capacitación ya lo tenemos pero a veces un empuje tal vez nos podría apoyar, eso es lo que por ejemplo he visto de las compañeras que han tenido el 100 por 100 de la capacitación de Misión Alianza, se les ha apoyado ya con materiales así y ellas han salido adelante no? y están, eso para mí sería para lo principal, un pequeño empuje ya para poder ir más allá (Informante H).

I can say that: “enough, now respect us - respect us as one of you [men]”. I always tell the brothers this [...]. They have to respect us [in order to] be respected in return. We are equal to them [...]. The young people should also get to know the rights of women and [about having] gender equality. So, you must understand that, the elders did not learn about it, but now, the younger [generation] should start to learn about it (Informant F).⁶⁷

Informant F is focused on claiming the right to respect from men, but also emphasises that the respect has to go both ways. Informant C sees collaboration as a resource:

As one single family or as one single person we can only cultivate in one single field [agriculture], but as a group we can develop much more and we can harvest together, in the same fields (Informant C).⁶⁸

Informant C presents a great portrait of how cooperation will benefit everyone. Through collaboration they can sow and harvest together.⁶⁹ As a group they have more resources and can develop even further.

5.2.4 Improvements and further suggestions

In the end of the interviews, I asked my informants to share if they had experienced any changes after participating in the courses. Moreover, I asked them to share any suggestions on how their local society could advocate and protect women’s rights, and ensure that more women could experience empowerment. The changes within the relationships were among the major improvements mentioned, known in Rowlands theory as the *relational empowerment*, meaning that “empowerment is about developing the ability to negotiate an influence the nature of relationship and decisions made with it” (Rowlands, 1997:15).

Informant A shares how her husband has now started to engage in the courses:

He does not see me as just an object in the house, he values me now. And of course, we both have to value each other. I have to value his work, and he has to value me as a woman (Informant A).⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Sí yo puede decir ya respeten, respetarnos como a ustedes mismos diciendo, eso yo les pido, siempre les digo a los hermanos no ve? tienen que respetarnos también para hacerse respetar ustedes diciendo, nosotros somos igual a ustedes [...]. También a los jóvenes les digo también tienen que saber ya los derechos de las mujeres, equidad de género, ya tienen que aprender, los mayores no han sabido pero los jóvenes ya tienen que saber (Informante F).

⁶⁸ Como una sola familia o como una sola persona no puede digamos no? hacer un desarrollo, sembrando uno sólo digamos un cultivo, pero si nos agrupamos y hacemos entre varias personas un cultivo se puede (Informante C).

⁶⁹ The districts around Caranavi are mostly working with agriculture, but lack of modern tools and machines makes the work heavy and time consuming.

Informant A emphasises the importance of having equal respect in her relationship. Although she has experienced discrimination from her husband, she still pinpoints that it is important that she values her husband - and they have to value each other. Informant I shares a similar experience, and explain that her husband did not know how to value her before:

Before he [her husband] did not know how to value me. He said: “Women go to these courses in vain, they will never learn” [...]. My husband did not know how to value me before, but now he supports me, he goes to the courses with me and we go everywhere, and we are participating [in the courses], working and are always together (Informant I).⁷¹

Both Informant A and Informant I describe how their relationship has changed as their self-confidence have increased, by showing this through participating in the courses and sharing about what they have learned. According to Rowlands, the most essential in being empowered, is that the women develop self-confidence and self-esteem, “and a sense of agency, of being an individual who interact with her surroundings and cause things to happen” (Rowlands, 1997:111). On the other hand, Informant C seemed more hesitant to having too many changes, and thinks that men should continue to be “pillars of the home”:

I believe that men and women, we have our own roles. To me, being empowered does not mean that we are more [valuable] than the other [men]. Generally speaking [in a Bolivian context] people say that men are the pillars of the home and we [women] want it to remain like that. [On the other hand] I believe that we have to know our roles as women, and also as a couple, because we are in the same marriage. We have to respect one another, and the husbands also have to give us space, just like we should give space for the husband. I think that is a good principal. I do not think they have taken away all the power from us [the way it is now]. But [men’s behaviour against women] have created difficult circumstances for women, where we are suppressed. But I believe that when we educate more women, and better comprehend the relation of how men and women should be. Well, we have maybe constructed our society like that ... where we [women] have always been in a lower [position than men] [...]. But I tell you, we have to continue to be educated and move forward, maybe have more

⁷⁰ No simplemente me ve digamos como un objeto en la casa, sino que ya él me valora.. Y claro ambos nos tenemos que saber valorar. Valorarse unos a los otros. Porque yo tengo que saber valorar su trabajo de él, él tiene que saberse valorar como mujer (Informante A).

⁷¹ Él antes no me sabía valorar, ah vos mujer en vano nomás al curso van, ni siquiera van a aprender, que cosa van a aprender pues [...] no me sabe valorar mi esposo antes, ahora sí él me apoya, anda al curso, anda a todo lado siempre estamos con él más así con mi esposo (Informante I).

information on these issues and also know our roles and what we have to do as mothers, and as couples. I believe this will help us move forward (Informant C).⁷²

Informant C is reflecting on the roles of men and women, and what kinds of changes that are necessary for change to happen. She points out that men are the pillars of the home, and she believes that they should continue to be that in the future as well. However, she explains that the men are making circumstances difficult for women. Furthermore, she questions if it is a social construction of the society that is upheld by not only men, but by women as well. Informant C shows a great ability to reflect over how gender equality can be achieved. Instead of attacking the unfairness experienced, she rather speaks of both genders being respected equally. This attitude is striking, and is in many ways an example of a woman that seems to have *power-within*. Power within signifies inner strength based on self-confidence and acceptance of the use of power in a constructive way, as opposed to an attitude “to have power over men” as others expressed. Rowlands points out that the “core” of the empowerment process “involves a fundamental psychological and psychosocial processes and changes” (Rowlands, 1997:111). Informant F describes how the courses have helped her gain respect from the men:

I think that to have teachings is more important than anything, and learning to defend ourselves, when it comes to speaking out [in public], because if we stay silent they [men] will just continue to dominate in decision-making. So yes, we need training, so they [the men] will respect us and are made aware of us (Informant F).⁷³

⁷² Yo creo que hombres y mujeres tenemos nuestro rol. No porque hay un empoderamiento digamos nos vamos a querer ser más que el hombre no? Eso yo creo que siempre el hombre como se dice, es el pilar del hogar, tampoco vamos a sobrepasar no? Pero yo creo que tenemos que conocer también nuestro rol como mujer, como pareja, porque en el mismo matrimonio mismo dice, no? Que tenemos que respetarnos entre nosotros, el hombre también darnos nuestro lugar y nosotros también dar el lugar al hombre, yo creo que teniendo un buen principio. No creo que nos hayan quitado el poder. Pero han hecho algunas circunstancias que bueno las mujeres hemos estado allá abajo, pero yo creo que si nos capacitamos y comprendemos más lo que se trata la vida entre un hombre y una mujer yo creo que estamos no más por ahí. Bueno, hemos construido tal vez así nuestra sociedad, donde nosotros siempre hemos estado ahí abajo. Como le digo, si nos vamos a ir capacitando y tal vez informando de las cosas y también conociendo bien nuestro rol que tenemos que hacer como madres y como pareja. Yo creo que vamos a estar bien no más por ese lado (Informante C).

⁷³ Por eso capacitación más que todo, sí, defendernos, hablar, si no hablamos calladitas todito a su manera aprueban, a su manera dicen, deciden, sí, nosotros tenemos que capacitar no ve? ahí nos van a tener miedo también pues, sí (Informante F).

“We must support women”, says some of the [men], probably 2-3 [men] out of a hundred. While the majority are just quietly and passively remaining anonymous in these matters. On the other hand, there are other men that points to us, and say: “these women who know it!” (Informant F).⁷⁴

Informant F points out that there are men who participate in the courses in her local societies. According to her however, only 2-3% of the men participate and engage in the women’s projects, though the majority remain passive. Still, Informant F has experienced men that compliment women for sharing their opinions and states that: “these women know it!” This is a great achievement, because when the men acknowledge women, particularly if it is done in public, this might encourage both genders to participate and step, by step change the male-dominant culture.

To change women’s position in society may take time, and it is a danger that women become discouraged in the process. According to Batliwala, “support for women acting to meet their own needs, through generating income or provide credit, and the creation of women’s organisations and network are important strategies in the empowerment process” (Batliwala 1993 in Rowlands, 1997:24). Batliwala insists that empowerment has to include the action element as well as the changes in awareness and self-image. Informant E points to cooperation at a domestic level as the most important:

We are asking to share chores, like for example [taking care of the] children, because sometimes we speak and the men are not willing to listen to us (Informant E).⁷⁵

While Informant D is suggesting that the most important change is related to engagement in the social processes in their society:

[There should be] more training, understanding, coordination, awareness and socialisation, and also men should understand that women have the same rights as them [...]. In my community and in our meetings, I claim this. Here, we have to give the words to women, we have to take them into account, even if we do not speak appropriate, and we have to listen. That’s what I claim, and that’s the reason why I have become a local leader (Informant D).⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Hay que apoyar también a las mujeres, dicen algunos, del 100 debe haber unos 2 o 3 personas hay, otros calladitos, otros siempre ay! esas mujeres que saben pues dicen (Informante F).

⁷⁵ Estamos pidiendo ya así correr de ambos, sí los hijos más todos en junto, porque las mujeres aparte hablamos una y los hombres no escuchan (Informante E).

⁷⁶ Capacitación, entendimiento, coordinación, sensibilización y socialización tendría que haber para que conozcan también los varones que las mujeres que tienen igual derecho que los hombres, así ... Yo en mi comunidad reclamo, en las reuniones también, aquí nos tienen que dar palabra a las mujeres, nos tienen que

Informant D is also sharing that in her own process, she has learned to speak out and claim her rights, which is the reason why she is now a local leader. Informant C explains how being a group can make everyone more visible, when they cooperate as a group it is easier to mobilise forces:

This would be my advice, for my fellow companions, that we should always look for a group, well, to make a force, right? We can be visible; we become stronger together and can achieve more with education (Informant C).⁷⁷

Similar to Informant C, Informant J also suggests focusing on the collective level, to gather in groups and participate in courses:

I would have more open conversations... and we need more workshops so that women can continue to be trained. Since there is little support from our government...the support we have received from the MAN-B, has helped us a lot (Informant J).⁷⁸

The importance of having a network and being able to cooperate is a view she shares with Informant G:

[Gender equality] is very important because we support both the woman and the man to move forward. If you are alone, you cannot continue to move forward, because both have to support each other at home, both have to cooperate – in everything. Also, the communication part is very important. You have to learn how to listen to your husband or wife. To listen to each other and respect each other, these things are very important [factors] in a family [...]. There has to be respect. [...] We should not shout to each other. You [men/husbands] should value your woman. This respect is important for both women and men, because they have the same rights. But well, women need to be valued more (Informant G).⁷⁹

tomar en cuenta, aunque no hablemos bien nos tienen que escuchar, yo me reclamo eso, por eso también he sido dirigente (Informante D).

⁷⁷ Ese sería mi consejo para mis compañeras, que de siempre buscar en grupo, y hacer una fuerza no? Y hacernos ver, las mujeres que sí podemos hacer muchas cosas por la educación [...] (Informante C).

⁷⁸ Yo abriría más charlas...y como más talleres para que nosotros las mujeres nos capacitemos más. Quizás eso no hay apoyo de nuestro gobierno pero... de que he visto de MAN-B ha habido apoyo, entonces eso nos ha ido levantando un poco más (Informante J).

⁷⁹ Eso es muy importante porque así vamos a apoyarnos ambos tanto la mujer y varón para seguir adelante, porque a veces uno solo no puede seguir porque ambos tienen que apoyarse, ambos tanto sea en la casa, en todo, los 2 tienen que coordinar, porque es bien importante la parte de comunicación también y también tiene que saber escuchar el esposo, ambos no? escucharse y el respeto, esas cosas son muy importantes en la familia [...] Tiene que haber el respeto tanto... no solamente gritarse o no valorar a la mujer sino ese respeto a ambos, que

The informants are both referring to relational and collective empowerment in their suggestions for further improvements. However, Rowlands claims “empowerment within the context of close relationships does not appear to be an invariable consequence of personal empowerment” (Rowlands, 1997:125). In many respects, to make changes within a close relationship seems to be the most difficult area of change for women. The closest relationship may be characterised by great ambiguity. Rowlands explains that relational empowerment “not only involves changes in the woman’s own expectations and behaviour, but also changes in the expectations and behaviour of her partner and close family members (Rowlands, 1997:125). In these last quotes, the informants shared about changes in their relationships that have resulted in positive impacts in their lives. Through the experiences they have shared here, the women achieved some changes that have enable them to participate in the courses, and furthermore to make decisions for themselves. Informant G gives one of the clearest examples of this change in relationship:

My dad is a bit ... very machista. But he is changing. I always listen to what he has to say, and afterwards I give him an orientation, right? And I also take him to the workshops, and he is changing. Before he could say that “making food is the work of women”, he used to speak like that. But now, I sometimes remind him [that he is wrong], and then he responds with “ah!” So, he realises that he has said something wrong too (Informant G).⁸⁰

Informant G illustrates a change in her relationship with her dad, where she lets her dad speak his opinions, and when he is done, she gives him an orientation. By making her dad aware of the changes happening in the society related to gender equality, she opens up for a conversation, rather than being offended. Rather, her approach is respectful, she listen to his opinions first, which makes it easier for her own opinions to be respected in return. The fact that it results in her father realising that he said something wrong is proof of this.

5.3 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have analysed the findings that emerged during the interviews with the ten informants. I categorised them into two parts: the first part explains their role as women in

los 2 tienen los mismos derechos tanto mujer y varón tienen los mismos derechos y... bueno tiene que más valorar a la mujer también (Informante G).

⁸⁰ Mi papá un poco es muy... muy machista. Pero está cambiando. Yo siempre les digo así es, así es, entonces le oriento no? y también le llevo a los talleres, está cambiando ya. Porque antes no, no mujer no más decía, las mujeres nomás deben cocinar así hablaba antes, sí. Sí, todo decía así no? ese es el trabajo de las mujeres así. Siempre a veces habla, pero a veces le hago recuerdo, pero así, ah! Recién se da cuenta también (Informante G).

their local society, where the women discussed challenges related to gender equality, divided into the topics of “fear”, “machismo” and “lack of self-esteem”. In the second part, I focus on their personal experiences of empowerment. I divided it into the topics “leadership”, “practical skills and contribution to economy”, “personal versus collective empowerment” and at last “changes and improvements”. The analysis has provided insight into how the women from the MAN-B have experienced the empowerment process. I will further discuss their experiences in the next chapter.

In this chapter I have tried to present the contrasting opinions from the data material where it has been possible, however the informants seems to agree on most of the topics I asked about. For this reason, it has been challenging to compare the informants’ opinions. The grade of similarity, even though there was a good spread of regional representatives and different experience with MAN-B among the informants, can be interpreted as an important finding in this research.

This chapter illustrated the importance of giving women tools to taking control over their own lives and situations. In my opinion, the empowerment process have been expressed in various ways by the informants, though the areas of where the women have found strength and power are different, it is reasonable to think that they have found ways to improve their conditions. The informants have also pointed at specific factors of the unbalance in existing power balance between the genders and that there are different obstacles to the process; fear, machismo culture and lack of self-esteem are all examples of these obstacles. However, this chapter has also provided the ideas the informants shared on how to change these obstacles and they have frequently illustrated that the courses and teachings from MAN-B have made them aware of their own rights, and their value as individuals and their strength as a group. As a result of the courses from MAN-B the existing challenges have been highlighted which has resulted in an increased awareness.

6 Discussion

This chapter is divided into two subchapters. The first part will provide an understanding of the empowerment process based on Rowlands power-theories, while the second part will be focusing on how the empowerment process was experienced by the informants.

6.1 Understanding the empowerment process

In chapter three, I presented Rowlands feminist model of power. The idea of power is the root of the term empowerment, and Rowlands framework explains the various forms of power that are important to be aware of in order to understand the process of empowerment. The different forms of power will be presented in the same structure, which is: *power-over*, *power-to*, *power-with*, and lastly, *power-from-within*.

6.1.1 Power-over

“*Power-over* means to control power, which may be responded with compliance, resistance or manipulation” (Rowlands, 1997:13). Many of the informants revealed grave information about their current situation and how the culture of machismo was a constant challenge within their families and local society. *Power over* is a negative and controlling power, and according to Rowlands it is the most visible in the inhibiting elements, “such as machismo, male violence, and women’s lack of control over their fertility or over land” (Rowlands, 1997:130). In other words, *power-over* takes a very negative form, as a power that hinders women’s empowerment. The nature of gender power relations as a social and cultural construction makes the process for change complicated. The examples the women shared of contained consequences of obstacles to the empowerment process, which were related to fear, low self-esteem, gender violence and lack of opportunities. In particular, fear and violence was a topic that frequently came up when the participants elaborated on their experiences as women in their local society.

The interviews raised an awareness of how both psychological and physical violence were frequently used to push women down. Ultimately this can leave the women more scared to do anything but obey their husbands. Gender violence is a clear example of the resistance of women becoming empowered, and is often issued when speaking of gender inequality in Bolivia. Social exclusion of women as a result of the machismo culture, which portrays men as the strong and powerful male provider, is still causing obstacles for women’s empowerment. In particular, some of the informants in this research shared of violence within

their family. Rowlands provides an understanding of power related to violence: “people who are constantly and systematically denied power and influence in a society, can internalize messages they receive about their own value and turn these messages to their own truth” (Rowlands, 1997:11). This understanding of power can also describe what happens when women are mistreated. If a woman expresses her personal opinions, and as a result is subjected to violent abuses, she is in danger of starting to withhold her own opinions. Eventually, she will come to believe that she has no opinions of her own. And when control becomes internalised in this way, it is no longer necessary to assert power overtly (ibid).

Moreover, the informants shared about their own interpretation of power, and the majority understood power as *power over*, in the sense that men always have to be in charge and make the decisions. As stated in Rowlands theory, by looking at power defined as *power over* through a gender analysis, “power is wielded predominately by men over other men, and by men over women” (Rowlands, 1997:11). The machismo culture and the patriarchal power structures were particularly highlighted in the interviews as restricting women’s work and leadership opportunities in their local society. This was also revealed in the informants’ characteristics when they explained their role as women, which was most frequently based on gender stereotypes, where women were expected to stay at home and take care of the family. In addition, it was also expected that they helped their husbands at work, which the informants explained laid an extra burden on them. With this understanding of power, it seems that the only solution will be that women gain power at the expense of men. And as a result, many men can experience this as a threat, because in their culture it is strongly expected that men are to be the dominant and the ultimate decision-maker.

6.1.2 Power-to

“*Power-to* is generative or productive power which creates new possibilities and actions without domination” (Rowlands, 1997:11). While the first part of the analysis revealed stories of violence as a result of the machismo culture, many of the informants also narrated changes in attitudes from their husbands as they received training, and also as a result of receiving an income. Moreover, of the extent to which the women gained power within the household as a direct result of having income, the informants shared of an increased respect from their husbands. *Power to* can be described as the type of power that allows the women to exercise their agency for their interests. An example of this is when the informants shared of experiences that gave them *power to* participate in new forms of activities, such as

learning to make handcrafts and participate in meetings. This involved using what they had learned to influence new areas of activity. As a result of the courses from MAN-B, the informants also shared of a greater sense of possibilities, particularly through organising reunions with other women, and that this cooperation led to opportunities that had not been presented to them earlier. The women also shared of an increased respect from others (particularly men) both inside and outside their homes.

The informants stories illustrate that even small changes can help improve the conditions within each household. Though the machismo culture is deep-rooted and the shifts within the social and cultural norms will take time to change, there were given examples of changes that had helped the women stand up against the discrimination they faced. Furthermore, the informants shared of personal empowerment and the results of having knowledge about women's rights, and particularly Law 348. In addition, they shared of experiences where their self-esteem had increased, which led them to share their thoughts and demand the men to listen to them. For some of the women, the projects from MAN-B gave them more confidence. I marked this confidence in the interviews, particularly when the women mentioned their responsibilities in different areas: in leading their local women's group, in increased responsibility in agriculture and production of fruit and coffee, and through learning to make handcrafts and sell them.

6.1.3 Power-with

“*Power-with* is a sense of the whole being greater than the sum of the individuals, especially when a group tackles problems together” (Rowlands, 1997:11). *Power-with* is women's ability to organise with others to enhance their rights, which is a key factor to women's empowerment. According to Domingo et al. (2015), women's participation in smaller groups can also increase their confidence and self-belief, which can lead to more efficient leadership skills. In addition, “women organising with other women around shared interests builds their capabilities for voice and influence” (Domingo et al., 2015:3). In this sense, the informants shared *power-with* the other participants in the women's groups, through having a place to share practical interests, needs and demands, as Informant C pointed out: “we become stronger together and we can make a force”.⁸¹ All the informants agreed that being part of a group gave them an identity and a sense of “being in this fight together”. Furthermore, the

⁸¹ All the quotes from the Informants that I refer to in this chapter, have already been presented in the analysis.

informants explained how knowing that there are women, who are already marching ahead of them to help put forward women's rights in Bolivia, is a great encouragement. Perhaps the clearest proof of this, is when women march together against gender violence. On one hand, this collective response might lead to *power-over* since the group marching both dominate and prioritise their own agenda. On the other hand, Rowlands states that: "this is less likely to happen where these abilities are developed in an atmosphere that prioritises *power-with*" (Rowlands, 1997:128). Rowlands states that *power-with* can mean finding strength to organise and fight together for a cause or a goal, which the informants' experiences demonstrate. They also mentioned that the women's groups helped them break out of isolation at home, and the value of making new friends. It was also emphasised that the projects helped them engage in activities outside their homes, and that the courses became a place where they could receive useful education and practical support. The courses also had the added effect were the participants realised that they could learn new skills, which further led to an increase in the women's self-esteem and sense of self-worth. It was highlighted by the women that particularly learning new skills in handcrafts and leadership resulted in teaching them to speak up in front of people, to have a voice and express their opinions.

6.1.4 Power-from-within

"*Power-from-within* is the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each one of us and makes us truly human. Its basis is self-respect, in turn, to respect for and acceptance of others as equals" (Rowlands, 1997:13). This means that women develop capabilities and learn to express their views. Access to decision-making roles and leadership are the first steps towards giving women a voice and influencing the society. My findings indicate that many of the women had increased influence in their society, as a direct effect of participating in the courses from MAN-B. In addition, the increased influences led to strengthening their participation and further extending the women's network. Domingo et al. (2015) emphasises that, "importantly, organising with other women can itself build the capacity for voice, such as critical consciousness and confidence" (Domingo et al., 2015:85). The women's participation in these groups can help strengthen women's conditions, particularly through raising awareness in important matters, which Law 348 is an example of.

Many of the informants gave accounts of violence and discrimination based on gender inequality. They also shared insight on how they themselves must take action to improve their conditions. Some of the informants also showed an ability to reflect on how they treated

their own children and husbands. As Rowlands points out, “empowerment is a process that involves moving from insight to action” (Rowlands, 1997:15). Informant I illustrated this in her personal process, where she first stated how she became aware of her own rights and her children’s rights. She also came to the realisation that violence should not be a part of her family, be it toward herself, her children or her husband. As a result of the courses from MAN-B, she gained more knowledge and “moved from insight to action” where she apologised to her son for hitting him, and also confronted her husband about the violence she had experienced from him. To mobilise power-from-within was also illustrated by Informant B, who encouraged others to go to the authorities or to their husbands and say: “I have my rights and you cannot hit me [...] we both have rights”.

6.2 Experiencing the empowerment process

The aim of this thesis is to scrutinise women’s experiences of empowerment, by which I refer to empowerment as a process, where the attempt is to “strengthening people’s ability to solve their own problems, through giving them a stronger role in the society” (Vilby, 2006:234). In the analysis, I presented the different areas where the informants experienced a process of empowerment. The areas emphasised were through developing leadership skills, including practical skills and contribution to the economy. In this part I will discuss these areas, and further seek to explain the different dimensions of empowerment, through personal, relational and collective empowerment. Similar categorisation will be employed in the following subchapters.

6.2.1 Developing leadership skills

In order for the empowerment process to improve women’s conditions in Bolivia, it is first and foremost necessary that they have the opportunity to improve their positions in their families and their local societies. In other words, the women need to be released from the current position as inferior to men. “Empowerment is seen as dynamic and ever changing and it can vary widely according to the circumstances” (Rowlands, 1997:127). When the informants shared of leadership, I believe that it was not merely related to being a leader, but also that the women experienced an increased strength and control over their lives. The empowerment process is closely related to persons control over their lives so they can “control their lives more efficiently towards their personal needs and aims” (NOU, 1998:18). As a result, empowerment can lead to more freedom and possibilities. Nevertheless, the empowerment process is non-linear and will most likely change through the entire life of

each woman. The informants all agreed that they had experienced “an ability to strengthen their position” and described how their roles had changed after participating in MAN-B’s projects. Through the courses, they dared to step out of some of the negative traditions that were upholding the machismo culture.

6.2.2 Economic empowerment

In the analysis, some of the informants expressed that the ability to earn their own income was crucial to their own empowerment process. In addition the women felt more appreciated by their husbands. Rowlands describes the process of empowerment as “a feeling of a personal change and development, and also manifested, or demonstrated, in changed behaviour” (Rowlands, 1997:114). If we compare Rowlands theories with what was shared by the informants, there is some correlation, which serves as an example of an ongoing empowerment process.

Each of the informants experienced this process of empowerment in a personal way, related to her background, family and also her actions. Through asking my informants about suggestions they had in order for other women (in their local society) to be empowered, I also got an insight in what they experienced helped in this matter, and suggestions of improvements. Some of the informants emphasised that contributing to the economy was the most crucial for their ability to empower. In their experience, the income led them from a place where they were seen as of “no value” to their husbands, to a place where they felt appreciated. In contrast, both learning handcrafts and having the ability to sell their crafts, was a turning point for the women, as Informant I affirmed: “Thanks to the courses we have learned to value ourselves”. By empowering and strengthening women through these programs, the group of individuals (the family or society) can make necessary changes and help improve conditions that will benefit everyone. Rowlands points out that “economic activities may widen the range of options for marginalised people, but do not necessarily enable them to reach a point where they can take charge of creating for themselves the option from which they get to choose” (Rowlands, 1995:104). Furthermore, she explains that there is a need for a combination of “self-esteem, information, analytical skills, ability to identify and tap into available resources, political and social influence, and so on, is needed” (ibid).

There is a lot of economic literature that signals how economic empowerment can result in decision-making and power dynamics around household decisions. The informants in this

research also confirmed this. When the women proved that they could generate income, it led to increased respect from their husbands. One can question whether this was a result of the economic benefits, however the informants also shared that they felt more appreciated by their husbands. This was of great importance and motivation to continue to gather in groups, which involved courses and teachings that resulted in more than just economic benefits. This is backed by Domingo et al. (2015) who states that: “economic empowerment can result in changes in decision-making power dynamics around household decisions, including in some cases in ways that lower the risk of domestic violence and increase the acceptance of women controlling assets” (Domingo et al., 2015:3).

6.2.3 Dimensions of empowerment

Individual: By starting with focusing on women’s own experiences and realities, building self-confidence and raising awareness seems to be of great importance. Based on their experiences, the women can point to areas they need to change in order to have gender equality. Through the teachings from MAN-B, the women revealed direct changes as a result of these teachings. In raising awareness about for instance Law 348, the women were able to have something concrete to refer to if they are violently abused. Moreover, the women could set the priorities themselves, be it either focusing on leadership or participating in group-meetings, or through learning different practical skills.

“Empowerment, in the context of gender and development, is most usefully defined as a process (or processes) rather than an end product; it is dynamic and changing, and varies widely according to circumstance” (Rowlands, 1997:129). In the analysis of the interviews, I provided a few examples of how the empowerment process can take different forms depending on many factors, such as: the informant’s family background, age, and specific life experiences. For empowerment to be achieved it must be seen as a process that both “involves some degree of personal development, but that this is not sufficient; and that it involves moving from insight to action” (Rowlands, 1997:15). In other words, personal empowerment is intrinsically linked to relational and collective empowerment.

Relational empowerment: The informants regarded close relationships as important, and frequently mentioned that the key to empowerment was to “desenvolverse” which means, “to manage” or develop social skills. Since many of the women were not used to expressing their opinions out loud, it was of much value to have close friends or family that supported them

along the process. This could also provide them with a place to practice to express their thoughts and opinions.

According to Rowlands (1997:125) “the individual women playing the most active roles, have more difficulties in their relationships with their partners, and some perceive those relationships as something they will never be able to do anything about”. It might be easier for a woman to receive support and encouragement from others in relation to her own personal empowerment. However, if she attempts to make changes in her relationship with her partner, it can be more difficult because it depends a lot on her partner. In a group one woman can be carried along with others, but on her own, she is dependent on her own resources. One thing I noticed in the interviews was that the informants that had a supportive partner or father, where also the women who experiences a greater sense of empowerment.

Collective empowerment: “Women’s individual and collective action, whether in formal politics, civic society or the economy, provide opportunities for women to voice their needs and demands” (Domingo et al., 2015:1). For the empowerment to develop from women’s “self-understanding” (Kabeer, 1994) to a greater sense of collective action, it is crucial that women both understand their situations and come together to bring about change that can benefit not only them, but also other women in their society. Rowlands argues that empowerment “must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy [...] decision-making space, so that people affected come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and have influence (Rowlands, 1997:87). In this sense, collective empowerment is the process were women take collective action that leads to confidence, voice and influence. Furthermore, collective empowerment can stimulate women to come together and act, which was most clearly illustrated by “power with”.

Power-relations are essential in the discussion of the empowerment process. When empowerment of women increases, they also have an increased ability to develop, on an individual level, an economic level and consequently on a collective level. Power relations have to be taken seriously, however it clearly touches upon sensitive cultural issues, which can in turn make women’s empowerment process a threat, because it means a need for change in deep-rooted beliefs and practices. Empowerment processes are dynamic and the three dimensions of empowerment suggested in Rowland feminist model of power are closely linked: positive changes in one dimension can encourage changes in either the same

dimension, or in another. “Factors that encourage empowerment can be reinforced and are reinforcing; inhibiting factors and obstacles can be mitigated, and overcome, thus serving to encourage and affirm empowerment” (Rowlands 1997:127-128).

6.3 Concluding remarks

The first part of this chapter provided an understanding on relevant power-theories. While several of Rowlands power theories can be used to describe how empowerment process works, the *power-from within* dimension probably got most traction based on the interviews that was done. This is important, as this can be the key for how empowerment best can be implemented in this area, with these women at that time. In the second part I presented the most important areas that the informants experienced an empowerment process, which was through developing leadership skills and economic empowerment. The experiences shared were also divided into individual, relational and collective empowerment, based on Rowland three dimensions of empowerment.

7 Conclusion

This thesis has investigated how women participating in MAN-B's projects in Caranavi, Bolivia, have experienced empowerment. The account of empowerment developed in this thesis is based on interviews from a fieldwork done within a short period of time and with a selection of ten informants. Despite potential weaknesses and limitations due to the amount of informants and amount of time spent, I believe that this thesis have contributed with some indicators for evaluating the empowerment processes. As previously stated and demonstrated through the analysis, empowerment takes different forms and is a complex process. The results from this research are therefore a contribution to an ongoing discussion on how empowerment can be achieved.

This research presents a foundation for an increased understanding of challenges and constraints of achieving women's empowerment and gender equality. Through analysing the interviews conducted, I seek to document the experiences, both negative and positive, in order to highlight limitations and opportunities to women's empowerment. The findings indicate that the women who were interviewed and participated in the projects and courses of MAN-B in Caranavi did experience levels of empowerment. The informants confirmed several elements that endorse the notion of an increased individual empowerment-process:

1. Increased self-esteem
2. Increased practical skills
3. Economic empowerment
4. Increased leadership-skills
5. Increased ability to express their opinions
6. Increased knowledge of their legal and political rights

This study's findings highlight that some of the informants seemed to have an added positive attitude to reaching gender equality, and ending gender violence. My findings also indicate that the informants wanted to improve their current situation. It is reasonable to conclude that many of the participants experienced an increased ability to solve and improve their conditions, as a result of the courses from MAN-B. In other words, the courses from MAN-B appear to have effect on the empowerment process. The methods that MAN-B is using can shed light on how the empowerment process works. Since the informants mentions several

elements that are needed, according to contemporary empowerment-literature, to achieve an increased empowerment, or at least start the process. It is also important to look at the methods that have been used to achieve this. By this rationale it is reasonable to assume that some of MAN-B empowerment-projects have influenced the participants.

The study indicates that the women who participated in MAN-B's projects have had a great advantage from these projects. A question for concern is whether or not there is a difference between rhetoric and practice for these women, and how dependent these are women of the constant presence of MAN-B. What will happen the day they pull out of this empowerment-initiative or region? The women interviewed shared these questions and was worried for the projects future. In terms of this probable challenge, it is important to emphasise that empowering others is not something that an outside force can easily influence. However, empowerment as a concept for DAP can be of great value in terms of organising and planning development interventions in a way that ensures that the needs of women are met. This research acknowledges the existing theories that focus on empowerment as a process. To understand empowerment is a bottom-up process rather than a top-down strategy. Women have to empower themselves. However, there is a significant value of providing a place where the women can organise, receive information and learn basic skills, and last but not least, encourage their empowerment process.

I believe that this thesis has demonstrated the positive empowerment effects from the MAN-B initiatives. In particular, the women shared of an increased understanding about their legal and political rights, which indicates that they are also more aware of what can lead them towards empowerment. There are many success-stories mentioned, and the informants' shared of an increased knowledge and understandings, particularly in matters were they have to claim their rights and not put up with either psychological or physical violence. In other words, the women voices an understanding of their value being equal to men on all areas. I believe that the increased knowledge about personal rights and awareness are crucial in the empowerment process.

Further research:

Empowerment is a topic that applies to a range of fields within social science, nevertheless the concept is in danger of losing its meaning. What this research illustrates is that it is

crucial to draw attention to women in societies with great gender inequality. My study is a contribution to already existing literature on women's empowerment. Based on the interviews, I have looked at a set of theories on women's empowerment, economic empowerment, and development theories that are presented in this thesis. This thesis has illustrated that empowerment can enhance peoples choices and opportunities, however there is a continuing need for areas in which women can organise and set the priorities needed for development. In my opinion, there are many areas related to women's empowerment of interest, such as projects focusing on microcredit and other economic resources, political participation and reproductive health and rights. There have already been done much innovative work on these areas, and it would be very interesting to evaluate some of that work.

This study's findings highlights that there are many different interpretations and perspectives on empowerment, I want to stress that the idea of empowerment is not to replace one form of empowerment with another. It was striking that the women interviewed also emphasised the importance of having equal respect and involve men in the projects. For further research, it would be very interesting to involve men to a larger extent, because I believe that their support is crucial for women's empowerment. Further research would for this reason involve inclusion of women and ensure their participation, but also take into account men's reflections on women's empowerment process. I believe that the most strategic way to support women's empowerment is by encourage both men and women to participation at all stages of the projects.

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Attachment 1: Interview guide, English version

Background and experience with MAN-B

1. Presentation of the participant: Who are you? (Age, family, background, education, profession).
2. For how long have you known about the MAN-B's projects? And for how long have you participated in the projects?
3. What are your experiences of these projects?
4. Do you remember the reason/motivation for joining the project?
5. Could you, in a few sentences, describe what you have learned – and what it has meant for you to be involved?

The role as a woman in your local society

6. What do you think characterises women in your local society?
7. What is your experience of your role as a woman in your local society?
8. Could you share a few things about what you believe is expected from you as a woman, in your local society?
9. MAN-B's projects often focus on "empowerment". What do you think about when you hear that expression? What does it mean to you?
10. What do you think is important to strengthen the role of women in your local society?
11. What do you mean would help for you and other women in your society, in order to strengthen your position and your opportunities in your local society?
12. Have you experienced a difference in your personal view of you (and other women's) role, after participating in these projects?

Gender equality and human rights

13. To what extent do you engage in questions relating human rights and gender equality?
14. Do you believe it is important that both men and women have the same rights in your society?
15. What should happen in order for men and women to achieve equal rights?
16. Is gender equality a topic that men in your society engage in?
17. Do you experience that gender equality can be discussed within your own family?

Sum up

18. What are your experiences after having participated in programs through the MAN-B?
19. Do you have any suggestions of how your local society can work to put forward women's rights and ensure that more women experience to be empowered/strengthened?
20. Is there anything you would like to add to this interview?

Attachment 2: Interview guide, Spanish version

Trasfondo y experiencias con Misión Alianza en Bolivia

1. Por favor dígame quien es usted? (Edad, familia, trasfondo, educación, profesión.)
2. Por cuanto tiempo a conocido los proyectos de MAN-B? Por cuanto tiempo ha participado en los proyectos de MAN-B?
3. Cual ha sido su impresión, experiencias o enseñanzas adquiridas con estos proyectos?
4. Recuerda usted la motivación o la razón por la cual usted empezó a participar en los proyectos?
5. Podría usted en pocas palabras describir lo que ha aprendido? Que significa para usted ser parte de este proyecto?

El rolé de genero como un mujer en tu sociedad local

6. Que es lo que mas caracteriza a las mujeres de su sociedad local según su opinión, según su punto de vista, según lo que usted cree?
7. En sus tareas como mujer, en su comunidad local, ¿como siente que es apreciada como mujer? Cual es su experiencia en su rol como mujer en su sociedad local?
8. Puede compartirme algo de lo que usted piensa, que los demás (otras personas alrededor suyo en su sociedad) quieren o esperan que usted haga en su sociedad local?
9. Los proyectos de MAN-B siempre se están hablando de “empoderamiento” ¿Qué piensa usted cuando escucha esta palabra/expresión?
10. ¿Qué piensa que se debe hacer para apoyar a la mujer y su participación ?
11. ¿Que se debe hacer para dar mas oportunidades y mejores posiciones a otras mujeres y a usted en su comunidad?
12. Ha experimentado una diferencia en su manera de verse a usted misma (y a otras compañeras) cuando ha participado en los proyectos de MAN-B?

Igualdad de genero y derechos humanos

13. Ha participado o ha estado activa en temas relacionados a la igualdad de genero?
14. Cree que es importante que los hombres y las mujeres tengan los mismo derechos en la sociedad?
15. ¿Qué debería de suceder para que las mujeres y los hombres tuvieran los mismos derechos?
16. ¿Están los hombres en su sociedad interesados en el tema: La igualdad en derechos?

17. Cree usted que puede hablar libremente acerca de la igualdad en derechos con su propia familia?

Finalizando

18. ¿Qué experiencias y aprendizajes ha tenido después de participar en los programas de MAN-B ?
19. ¿Qué consejo o sugerencia daría usted a su comunidad para darle mas importancia a que los derechos de las mujeres, y para que estos derechos se cumplan y se fortalezcan?
20. Hay algo adicional que quiera compartir en esta entrevista?