

Gender and empowerment: definitions, approaches and implications for policy

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ACRONYMS

ACORD	Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CEDPA	Centre for Development and Population Activities
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
EU	European Union
FP/RH	Family Planning/Reproductive Health
GDI	Gender-related Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GID	Gender in Development
GIDP	Gender in Development Policy (UNDP)
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JCGP	Joint Consultative Group on Policy (UN)
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LDC	Less Developed Country
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RYTEP	Rural Youth Training and Employment Programme (ILO)
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
TMSS	Thangermara Mahila Sebj Sengastha
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WID	Women In Development
WSSD	World Summit on Social Development

1. DEFINITIONS OF EMPOWERMENT¹

1.1 Definitions and usage of ‘empowerment’

The word ‘empowerment’ is used in many different contexts and by many different organisations. For example, literature about ‘empowerment’ is found in the fields of education, social work, psychology, in US radical politics in the 1960s and community development groups in the North and South, as well as in the work of feminist and development organisations.

There are a variety of understandings of the term empowerment due to its widespread usage. Although the term is often used in development work, it is rarely defined. Box 1 provides a sample of the different ways empowerment has been described or qualified, with particular reference to women’s empowerment.

The idea of ‘power’ is at the root of the term empowerment. Power can be understood as operating in a number of different ways:

- *power over*: This power involves an either/or relationship of domination/subordination. Ultimately, it is based on socially sanctioned threats of violence and intimidation, it requires constant vigilance to maintain, and it invites active and passive resistance;
- *power to*: This power relates to having decision-making authority, power to solve problems and can be creative and enabling;
- *power with*: This power involves people organising with a common purpose or common understanding to achieve collective goals;
- *power within*: This power refers to self confidence, self awareness and assertiveness. It relates to how can individuals can recognise through analysing their experience how power operates in their lives, and gain the confidence to act to influence and change this. (Williams *et al*, 1994).

Whilst understanding of power and empowerment have come from many different movements and traditions, the feminist movement has emphasised collective organisation (‘power with’) and has been influential in developing ideas about ‘power within’.

Power must be understood as working at different levels, including the institutional, the household and the individual. For some theorists power is a zero-sum: one group’s increase in power necessarily involves another’s loss of power. The idea of a

¹ This report was drafted by Zoë Oxaal, BRIDGE Resesarch Assistant, with guidance from Sally Baden, BRIDGE Manager who also edited the draft report. IDS Fellows Anne Marie Goetz and John Gaventa also gave advice, as well as Elizabeth Harrison, lecturer at the University of Sussex.

redistribution of power is therefore seen as necessarily involving conflict. In this perspective, women's empowerment would lead by implication to less power for men. Some feminist writers on power have challenged the idea that power must necessarily involve domination by some, and obedience or oppression of others. Men would also benefit from the results of women's empowerment with the chance to live in a more equitable society and explore new roles. The kinds of power described above as power-to, power-with and power-within can be developed as alternatives to power-over. For example DAWN² state:

The women's movement. . .at its deepest it is not an effort to play "catch-up" with the competitive, aggressive "dog-eat-dog" spirit of the dominant system. It is rather, an attempt to convert men and the system to the sense of responsibility, nurturance, openness, and rejection of hierarchy that are part of our vision (Sen and Grown, 1985:72).

Box 1: Perspectives on empowerment

The Human Development Report 1995, stresses that empowerment is about participation:

Empowerment. Development must be *by* people, not only *for* them. People must participate fully in the decisions and processes that shape their lives. (UN, 1995 b: 12) but at the same time promotes a rather instrumentalist view of empowerment; Investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but is also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development (UN, 1995b: iii)

For Oxfam, empowerment is about challenging oppression and inequality:

Empowerment involves challenging the forms of oppression which compel millions of people to play a part in their society on terms which are inequitable, or in ways which deny their human rights (Oxfam, 1995).

Feminist activists stress that women's empowerment is not about replacing one form of empowerment with another:

Women's empowerment should lead to the liberation of men from false value systems and ideologies of oppression. It should lead to a situation where each one can become a whole being regardless of gender, and use their fullest potential to construct a more humane society for all (Akhtar 1992 quoted in Batliwala 1994: 131).

Jo Rowlands points out that empowerment is a bottom-up process and cannot be bestowed from the top down:

The outside professional cannot expect to control the outcomes of authentic empowerment being given by one group to another hides an attempt to keep control. (Rowlands, 1995: 104)

² Development Alternatives with Women for a New (DAWN) is a network of southern activists, researchers and policymakers (see section 3).

From this multi-dimensional definition of power, it is evident that empowerment has several different and inter-related aspects. Empowerment is not only about opening up access to decision making, but also must include processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy that decision-making space (Rowlands, 1995). Empowerment is sometimes described as being about the ability to make choices, but it must also involve being able to shape what choices are on offer. Empowerment corresponds to women challenging existing power structures which subordinate women. As such, what is seen as empowering in one context may not be in another.

1.2 Empowerment in gender equality discourse

The current popularity of the term empowerment in development coincides with recent questioning of the efficacy of central planning and the role of 'the state', and moves by donor governments and multilateral funding agencies to embrace NGOs as partners in development. Political and institutional problems have gained prominence on the development agenda with a focus on human rights, good governance and participation. (Razavi and Miller, 1995).

Recent UN conferences have advocated that women's empowerment is central to development. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Agenda 21 mentions women's advancement and empowerment in decision-making, including women's participation in 'national and international ecosystem management and control of environment degradation' as a key area for sustainable development (quoted in Wee and Heyzer, 1995: 7). The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, discussed the population issue not just as a technical, demographic problem, but as a choice that women should be empowered to take within the context of their health and reproductive rights. The Copenhagen Declaration of the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD), called for the recognition that empowering people, particularly women, to strengthen their own capacities is a main objective of development, and that empowerment requires the full participation of people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions determining the functioning and well-being of societies. The Report of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women called its Platform for Action 'an agenda for women's empowerment' meaning that 'the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities' (UN, 1995a, no. 1).

The empowerment approach to women in development offers a number of attractions for development agencies over the other approaches. Because its origins are often stated as being from the South, it may appeal to Northern development institutions who wish to avoid charges of cultural imperialism, especially in relation to gender

policies.³ The bottom-up characterisation of the empowerment approach can be regarded as more in tune with the growing interest in participatory forms of development⁴. Current enthusiasm for NGOs, for ‘bottom up development’ and for empowerment, from both advocates within development organisations and from outside activists, can also be understood as a reaction to the frustrating experience of attempts to institutionalise gender in mainstream development policies and programmes (Razavi and Miller, 1995).⁵

The empowerment approach which has its origins in feminist and third world organisations (such as DAWN - see Box 2), emphasises the collective (‘power with’) dimensions of empowerment.

Box 2: Empowerment as a feminist vision of development

Development Alternatives for Women in New Era (DAWN) is a network of Southern activists, researchers and policymakers, which is closely associated with the development of ideas about women’s empowerment (e.g. by Moser, 1989). Founded in the mid-1980s, DAWN has questioned the impact of development on the poor, especially women, and advocated the need for alternative development processes that would give primary emphasis to the basic needs and survival of the majority of the world’s people. DAWN has sought to link micro-level activities from the experience of grassroots initiatives at community level, to a macro-level perspective. They challenge the assumption behind many projects and programmes targeting women, that the main problem for Third World women is insufficient participation in an otherwise benevolent process of growth and development. DAWN argue the need for a new vision of development based on the perspective of poor Third World women. This perspective focuses attention on the related problems of poverty and inequality and the critical dimensions of resource use and abuse (Sen and Grown, 1985).

DAWN stress the importance of women’s organisations in demanding and promoting change towards their vision of society, and to create the political will for serious action by those in power. It is not just individuals but organisations which are the focus of empowerment processes. The core activities proposed necessary to help bring about change are political mobilisation, legal changes, consciousness raising and popular education. For DAWN, then, empowerment of poor women is central to

³ The idea of empowerment as a notion with Southern origins is debated. The word empowerment does not have a direct or easy translation in some languages and the concept has been described as evolving more from Western individualism rather than from the politics of the South. In fact, a number of different genealogies of the concept can probably be traced.

⁴ ‘Participation’ and ‘empowerment’ are closely related, but it may be that some development organisations are more comfortable with the concept of participation, which is less overtly focused on challenging power relations.

⁵ Razavi and Miller (1995) point out that for gender policy advocates, this new emphasis on NGOs has contradictory implications. Efforts to mainstream gender at the macro-economic level do not fit easily with the project-oriented and sometimes ‘anti-state’ approach to development of NGOs.

their overall vision of development and has implications not just for the types of activity they promote but also for organisational structures and procedures:

Empowerment of organisations, individuals and movements has certain requisites. These include resources (finance, knowledge, technology), skills training and leadership formation on the one side; and democratic processes, dialogue, participation in policy and decision making and techniques for conflict resolution on the other... Within organisations, open and democratic processes are essential in empowering women to withstand the social and family pressures that result from their participation. Thus the long-term viability of the organisation, and the growing autonomy and control by poor women over their lives, are linked through the organisations' own internal processes of shared responsibility and decision-making. (Sen and Grown, 1985:82)

However, the meaning of empowerment can be seen to have altered as it has gained currency in mainstream development discourse. In this context, empowerment is often envisaged as individual rather than as collective, and focused on entrepreneurship and individual self-reliance, rather than on co-operation to challenge power structures which subordinate women (or other marginalised groups). This individualistic approach to empowerment fits together with the belief in entrepreneurial capitalism and market forces as the main saviours of sickly or backward economies, and with the current trend for limiting state provision of welfare, services and employment (Young, 1993). It is also consonant with a liberal approach to democracy, emphasising individual rights and participation in decision-making, through the electoral process.

Figure 1: Definitions of power and empowerment in practice⁶

Understanding of power	Implications in practice
power over	conflict and direct confrontation between powerful and powerless interest groups
power to	capacity building, supporting individual decision-making, leadership etc.
power with	social mobilisation, building alliances and coalitions
power within	increasing self esteem, awareness or consciousness raising, confidence building

The various understandings of power embedded in the concept of empowerment carry through into different approaches to empowerment in practice, illustrated in Table 1. These distinctions are useful in understanding the different approaches to empowerment of development organisations.

⁶ Thanks to John Gaventa (IDS Fellow) for suggesting this.

1.3 Empowerment as a process

Empowerment is essentially a bottom-up process rather than something that can be formulated as a top-down strategy. Understanding empowerment in this way means that development agencies cannot claim to ‘empower women’. Women must empower themselves. Devising coherent policies and programmes for women’s empowerment requires careful attention, because external agencies/bodies tend to be positioned with ‘power-over’ target populations. The training of development professionals, in government, NGOs or donor agencies does not always equip them to consult and involve others, which supporting empowerment requires.

Appropriate external support and intervention, however, can be important to foster and support the process of empowerment. Development organisations can, under some circumstances, play an enabling or facilitating role. They can ensure that their programmes work to support women’s individual empowerment by encouraging women’s participation, acquisition of skills, decision-making capacity, and control over resources. Agencies can support women’s collective empowerment by funding women’s organisations which work to address the causes of gender subordination, by promoting women’s participation in political systems, and by fostering dialogue between those in positions of power and organisations with women’s empowerment goals.

However, caution should be exercised against assuming that promoting a certain type of activity will necessarily lead to ‘empowerment’, as will be illustrated in section 2. Empowerment cannot be defined in terms of specific activities or end results because it involves a process whereby women can freely analyse, develop and voice their needs and interests, without them being pre-defined, or imposed from above, by planners or other social actors.

The assumption that planners can identify women’s needs runs against empowerment objectives which imply that women themselves formulate and decide what these interests are. Planning suggests a top-down approach, and yet women may define their interests differently from planners (Wierenga, 1994).

Planners working towards an empowerment approach must therefore develop ways of enabling women themselves to critically assess their own situation and create and shape a transformation in society. To some extent this may run against the logic of ‘planning’, because the content of such a transformation cannot be determined by planners in advance, if it is to be truly empowering to women. Wierenga (*ibid.*) argues that this transformation should be seen as part of an ongoing process rather than as a fixed goal in the distant future.

This paper examines the role of development agencies and organisations in processes of women’s empowerment. Section two examines the ‘empowerment approach’ in the policy and practice of gender equality initiatives in development organisations. Section three surveys different indicators that have been devised to assess women’s

empowerment. Section four draws out policy implications from the earlier discussion and proposes strategies for promoting women's empowerment.

2. APPROACHES TO EMPOWERMENT IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

2.1 Policy goals and frameworks for women's empowerment in development organisations

The term empowerment is currently in widespread use across a range of different organisations from women's organisations, to NGOs, governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies⁷. This section reviews some examples of how the concept of women's empowerment has been applied in a range of development organisations, both as a policy goal against which to assess the whole range of development activities, and in specific programme areas, such as microcredit, support for political participation and reproductive rights and health. Organisational cultures, processes and structures of accountability vary and this has implications for the strategies adopted to promote women's empowerment, which are highlighted here.

One example of an agency adopting empowerment as a policy goal is that of UNDP (see Box 3).

Box 3: Empowerment through decision making

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has recently adopted a Gender in Development Goal, which includes a commitment to advocating and promoting the empowerment of women in political and economic decision-making at all levels from the household to national government and in local, national and international administrative structures. Concretely, it is suggested that empowerment will be promoted through increasing women's decision making powers, the support of income generating activities and provision of skills and education to women (see Appendix 1 for further details of the Goal). No explicit links are made between UNDP's mainstreaming strategy (also part of the Gender in Development Goal) and its agenda for empowering women.

The UNDP policy framework offers the potential to address individual and collective empowerment of women at different levels, although in practice the main focus is on individual participation in decision-making, individual skills and economic self-reliance. The emphasis, then, is strongly on 'power to,' with little attention to the need to create spaces for women to be involved in shaping the decisions. It also tends to assume that increasing women's access to income and skills are of themselves empowering, whereas there is much evidence to suggest that income generating

⁷ The widespread and differing use of the term empowerment is evidenced by the fact that the UN Joint Consultative Group on Policy - JCGP (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, IFAD) Gender in Development sub-group has recently commissioned a review of key concepts on gender being used in UN agencies, including women's empowerment, gender, gender equality, gender equity, gender mainstreaming. This will include proposals for new definitions so that the concepts can be harmonised across UN agencies.

activities and training programmes aimed at women often increase their workload without increasing their decision making powers or control of resources.

Adopting empowerment as a policy goal implies the need for tools and processes which can translate the goal of women's empowerment into practice across the range of development activities. Box 4 gives an example of one attempt to do this, using the 'Women's Empowerment Framework'.

Box 4: 'Mainstreaming' women's empowerment

UNICEF's 1994 'Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls: A Policy Review' endorsed the use of the Women's Empowerment Framework as a conceptual and operational tool in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes. Training in gender analysis and in the application of the Women's Empowerment Framework for 80 percent of all UNICEF's professional staff was proposed to aid the mainstreaming of gender concerns in UNICEF programmes. A summary of this framework is given in Appendix 2.

UNICEF propose that the framework is used by development planners to determine whether a project or programme is at the welfare, access, awareness-raising, participation or control level. The framework is useful for analysing programmes as they can be identified as corresponding to different levels, and considered in terms of how to move into the higher levels, increasing empowerment. It is also helpful as it is inclusive of the welfare and access levels, which may indeed be necessary and valuable, but shows the need to move towards women's greater control and empowerment. In this way, it is not alienating or dismissive of efforts which may not be at the highest level in terms of promoting women's empowerment but encourages implementors to work towards this.

There are a variety of ways in which the Women's Empowerment Framework may be used or understood, which gives it flexibility in meeting the needs of different agencies.⁸ But the framework raises a number of questions and points of ambiguity, which it would be important to clarify before adopting it as an agency tool, as the impact and usefulness of the tool will depend on how it is applied. Points for consideration include: How easily can specific activities be classified in the different stages? By what process does an activity move from one stage to the next? A more fundamental limitation is that the framework is based largely on a micro-level understanding of gender inequality, and thus tends to downplay institutional and structural issues.

⁸ ACORD have also used Longwe's 'Women's Empowerment Framework' as a tool in research in Angola where it was found to be useful for looking at all aspects of the gender impact of a programme on women and gender relations. Indicators were developed relating to each of the different levels of the framework (Hadjipateras, 1996).

The process of 'gender mainstreaming' underway in many bilateral and international aid agencies also has implications for promoting women's empowerment. Gender mainstreaming strategies in governments and development agencies may help overcome problems of marginalisation of special women's units. The 'ghettoisation' of women's issues will not forward the process of women's empowerment. However, the integration of women into existing programmes and planning processes does not necessarily promote empowerment as energies may come to be primarily directed towards realising other institutional objectives. There is a continuing need for spaces in which women can work together to challenge the objectives of the institution from a feminist perspective (Lycklama à Nijeholt, 1991).

2.2 Empowerment in development activities

2.2.1 Current approaches to women's empowerment

A number of areas of activity in development have become closely associated with the promotion of women's empowerment, such as microcredit, political participation and reproductive health and much innovative work has been done in these areas.

However, there are clearly limits on the extent to which such activities in and of themselves can be said to be genuinely empowering. There is a tendency to assume that increasing access to resources, or decision-making power in one area, will necessarily carry through into other areas. It is not the delivery of credit *per se*, but the context in which credit is delivered which is vital in ensuring that women's control over resources and bargaining power is increased. Similarly, increased decision-making power at individual level and greater access to economic resources of women do not necessarily translate into greater representation or power of women within political institutions, an area which has proved remarkably resistant to change. Conversely, empowerment in one area cannot be sustained without attention to other facets. Reproductive and sexual rights, for example, cannot be fully exercised where women's lack of independent economic resources undermines their freedom to make choices and bargaining power.

Implementation of an empowerment approach in the context of hierarchically organised development organisations may prove difficult, where organisational cultures are biased against the participation and autonomy in decision-making of beneficiaries. This suggests that not just activities and policy frameworks but also organisational structures and processes need to be examined in promoting 'empowerment' and that personnel may need to alter their style of working. The emphasis on participation adopted by many development agencies is significant for empowerment, as projects and programmes should seek to be accountable to those they claim to be empowering. Such issues of accountability may present a challenge to donor agencies, whose ultimate responsibilities lie elsewhere than with target groups or beneficiaries.

Empowerment is demonstrated by the quality of people's participation in the decisions and processes affecting their lives. In theory, empowerment and participation should be different sides of the same coin. In practice, much of what passes for popular participation in development and relief work is not in any way empowering to the poorest and most disadvantaged people in society (Oxfam 1995:14).

For participation to promote empowerment it needs to be more than a process of consultation over decisions already made elsewhere. Strategies to support women's empowerment should encourage women's participation at all stages of projects, including evaluation. Attention to location and timing of meetings are also important to ensure women's participation. In this way, the process of participation should itself be empowering. More research is needed to bring a gender perspective into the current debates on participation. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and other approaches such as action research, and community research by women (e.g. on health issues) can be explored as methods which increase female participation and control over knowledge. However, such methods should not be adopted uncritically, since they can silence dissenting perspectives, including those of women (Mosse, 1994).

Participation may arouse conflict between different groups in a community especially when the basic principles of an aid agency differ from views within a particular community (e.g. on gender equality). Participation should not involve ignoring these conflicting interests in order to reach consensus (Oxfam, 1995).

Supporting women's organisations is one broad approach to promoting women's empowerment, which takes account of the collective aspects of empowerment. However, this can prove difficult, or backfire, if the availability of external funding and organisational changes which this brings about, undermine accountability to membership or creates internal tensions. Women's organisations are very varied and may not always serve the interests of poor women, or work in ways which support empowerment. Women's organisations which are empowering to women should by definition be accountable to their membership rather than an external agency. When organisations accept funding from an external source, they become accountable to the donor, as well as their members, sometimes leading to changes in structures and procedures, or tensions over how to allocate newly generated resources. Women's movements or networks may be loosely constituted and may be reluctant to accept funding either for ideological reasons or because of the level of formal organisation it can entail.

There are contradictions inherent for development agencies in institutionalising empowerment. If empowerment is adopted as a policy goal then it also must be worked through projects and programmes. Connections must be made between what is required for empowerment policy and the institutional structures created by gender mainstreaming. Tools such as Longwe's framework can prove useful in institutionalising a women's empowerment approach but efforts are needed to carry an empowerment approach beyond statements of policy intention, and to address the areas of monitoring and evaluation and institutional process.

2.2.2 Economic empowerment through credit programmes

Microcredit programmes, many targeting women and claiming to empower them, have become extremely popular among donors and NGOs in recent years. The change in development policies from the focus on women's active role in production as a means to more efficient development, to the approach of women's empowerment through women organising for greater self-reliance, has also meant a change in policies for the enhancement of women's economic role. The focus has changed from providing grants to financial assistance to women through the establishment of special credit schemes. Credit schemes are seen as having the potential to link women with the formal banking sector and thereby integrating women in mainstream development (Von Bülow *et al*, 1995). Many credit schemes aimed at women attempt to follow the model of well-known micro-credit providers such as the Grameen Bank. The problems of high administration costs and lack of collateral of small-scale women borrowers are overcome by establishing borrower solidarity groups based on joint liability.

The ability of credit schemes to promote women's empowerment has come under close scrutiny. Research on credit programmes has shown that apparently successful credit programmes targeting credit to women cannot be taken at face value without a more careful examination of the social context in which women live (see Box 5).

Box 5: Credit for women in rural Bangladesh

A study of rural credit programmes in Bangladesh highlighted the problems of ascertaining who actually had control over credit, as research showed that a significant proportion of women's loans were in fact controlled by male relatives (Goetz and Gupta, 1996). High repayment rates of loans by women cannot be taken as clear evidence that women have made effective loan investments, or that they have been empowered through the loan. Where men take control of loans and invest them badly, women's position may even be worsened, as women may be forced to mobilise repayment funds from resources which would otherwise be used for consumption or savings. The control of loans and repayment are also potential sources of gender-related tension within rural households (*ibid.*). Improving women's access to credit is a positive step, but is by no means enough to secure their 'economic empowerment'.

Even where women do maintain control over their loans, to what extent can they be said to have been empowered? The emphasis on informal sector economic enhancement, it has been argued, overlooks the structural factors that maintain the economic marginalisation of the poor. Women's experience of participation in rural development programmes can even be negative, because demands on women's labour may be intensified without finding substitutes for women's reproductive work at home (Goetz and Gupta, 1996). Women's potential for acquiring skills, experiencing the 'public' world, joining job-based associations and gaining formal sector employment are all limited by programmes which encourage home-based income generating activities. Credit and income-generation programmes tend to focus on

input delivery, measuring success in terms of how much credit is delivered to women, and by taking high repayment rates a proxy indicator of the success of these loans (*ibid.*). More attention needs to be paid to the quality of activities financed by loans, to ascertain if they are really empowering to women.

The example of a credit programme in Tanzania illustrates how translating empowerment goals into practice requires thinking through all aspects of programme implementation (see Box 6).

Box 6: Women and credit in Tanzania

A study of special credit schemes for women in Kilimanjaro, Northern Tanzania demonstrates the disparity between the rhetoric of empowerment and actual planning and implementation procedures. Evaluating the ILO financed Rural Youth Training and Employment Programme (RYTEP), the study pointed to 'a top-down implementation approach, too little emphasis on participatory processes, too little weight given to business training, predominant attitudes to women among implementors, and neglect of the legal aspects of soft loans as features of the scheme which corresponded badly to stated aims of empowerment.

The ILO RYTEP scheme aimed to create employment for young people, by providing money in the form of commercial credit rather than grants for starting up businesses, in order 'to discourage dependency on the government and encourage the spirit of self reliance' (ILO Project Document, quoted in Von Bülow *et al*, 1995). Projects established under the scheme include piggery, dairy, tailoring, gardening and other small scale businesses.

In practice, most loan takers were older women rather than the young men and women the scheme was aimed at, because the programme has to turn to existing income-generating groups to identify suitable clients for loans. Participants were allowed to have very little or no influence over the design of their own projects but when poor choices led to lack of produce to market, they were still expected to repay loans. Further problems were caused by the fact that loan agreements were drawn up in English, a foreign language to most participants. Insufficient explanation was given by bank staff so that most women had only a vague idea about the implications and risks involved in commercial loan taking.

The scheme suffered from low repayment rates (less than 60 percent in 1993). When repayments were not made, bank and donor staff threatened participants with court action. Within households, it was not clear who bore legal responsibility. In some houses this resulted in serious quarrels between spouses. Many men in the area have come to oppose their wives taking up loans, and a running joke was, '...if you want to get rid of your house and your farm, you just go ahead and allow your wife to take a loan'.

Source: Von Bülow *et al*, 1995.

Many microcredit/microenterprise initiatives can be viewed as promoting a narrowly individualistic definition of empowerment, and as ignoring the collective dimension of empowerment. By offering women credit, their lack of access to capital is treated as a technical problem which outsiders can identify and tackle without actually committing to deeper structural transformations (Von Bülow *et al*, 1995).

For credit and income generation programmes to have a positive impact on women's empowerment, they need to move away from a framework where women are the passive recipients of a service. Using borrower groups as the basis of social development activities can broaden the scope of credit programmes from a narrow focus on individual economic self-reliance. For example, BRAC offers paralegal training, health and family planning facilities, and non-formal primary education to its members. Women's NGOs may offer training which is better tailored to overcome gender-specific constraints to assertiveness, confidence and power within households and the local community, and make consciousness-raising a central programme component. Thangemara Mahila Sebuji Sengastha (TMSS) a women's NGO in Bangladesh, pursues cases through the local courts of illegal divorce, deprivation of inheritance rights, default on maintenance payments and rape (Goetz and Gupta, 1996).

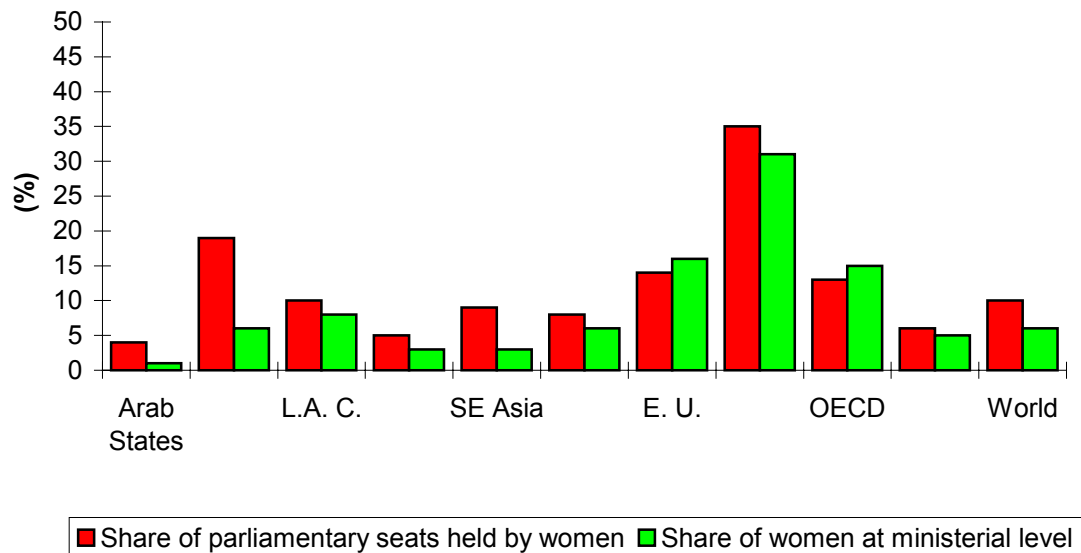
Ironically, the very success of credit programmes such as the Grameen Bank, may lead to a reduction in the practice of including social development and institution-building components. Goetz and Sen Gupta argue that donors' interests in seeing the development of financially self-sustaining credit programmes has led to quantitative goals for credit delivery and recovery supplanting more qualitative and elusive social change objectives (Goetz and Gupta, 1996).

Greater emphasis on savings programmes (where women build up their own resources) linked to credit provision and strategies for ensuring that women can access mainstream financial institutions are also important if credit programmes are to be 'empowering'. This involves institutional changes in the financial sector to reduce transactions costs, as well as delivery of small scale credit (Baden, 1997).

2.2.3 Empowerment through political participation

One important approach to supporting women's empowerment is the promotion of the participation of women in formal politics, alongside support to broad programmes of democratisation and good governance with a strong focus on developing civil society. This includes promoting women in government and national and local party politics as well as supporting women's involvement in NGOs and women's movements. In 1994, only 5.7 per cent of the world's cabinet ministers were women (UN, 1995b: 151). In government, women in decision-making positions tend to be concentrated in social, law and justice ministries. Less women are to be found in chief executive and economic areas. This poor representation is in spite of the fact that women are found in large numbers in lower-level positions in public administration, political parties, trade unions and business, who could potentially serve as representatives at higher levels (Karl, 1995).

Figure 2: Women's representation in political institutions (1994)



Source: UNDP, 1995

There are a range of possible mechanisms to increase women's participation in political life which have had varying degrees of success including:

- reform of political parties; quotas and other forms of affirmative action;
- training to develop women's skills and gender sensitivity;
- work with women's sections of political parties;
- and the development of women's political organisations.

Quotas have been used to increase women's participation in the leadership of political parties and in party lists for elections. They may be one of the only ways to ensure some representation of women in countries where this is very low, and they can be effective where women already have some degree of political power, such as in the Nordic countries or South Africa. For example the Norwegian Labour Party stipulates that at least 40 percent of candidates for election must be women. In Norway, quotas proved an effective way of increasing the number of women in parliament. In order that women's perspectives are placed on the political agenda a critical mass of women is required, with 30 per cent often cited as a figure above which women begin to make an impact on political life.

However, quotas for women in elections have proved a very controversial measure meeting much resistance and requiring a good deal of political will. They are a mechanism more frequently used by political parties than by governments. A number of parliaments have operated a mechanism of reserved seats for women, e.g. in Bangladesh, Egypt, Nepal, Pakistan and Tanzania. The drawbacks of this system are that token women may be appointed who in actual fact have little power and lack

appropriate skills, and that reserved seats may be interpreted as a ceiling for the number of women in parliament (Karl, 1995).

The transfer of power to local government of decentralisation strategies which form part of democratisation and governance agendas, has the potential to create spaces at the local level for women as political actors. However, efforts to increase women's representation in local politics through affirmative action or reserved seats in India and Bangladesh have shown that female councillors elected under this system may have little impact, tending not to speak in meetings, and lacking knowledge about the problems faced by women in their constituencies.

Measures to increase the quality of women's political participation include awareness raising, training programmes for female candidates, the cultivation of links and networks between women in local government and women in NGOs, and timing of meetings and provision of childcare to fit with women's domestic responsibilities (Byrne *et al*, 1996). Leadership training can enable women to develop skills useful not only in party politics, but also in negotiations with development agencies and in promoting the formation of independent organisations. It can help women to monitor the implementation of laws, to identify allies, share information, and research new ways of promoting political participation (Reardon, 1995).

Increased political participation for women is not just about increasing the numbers of women in formal politics. Women in politics may be elites, in positions due to their personal connections with male politicians and be unable or unwilling to represent grassroots women's interests. Morena Herrera, of *Mujeres por la Dignidad y la Vida*, El Salvador, argues that is important to 'feminise' the power spaces, so that there are increasing numbers of women in the spaces where decisions are taken nationally and internationally, but that it is also necessary to simultaneously strengthen the women's movement as a political lobbying force that can establish dialogue with those very power structures (Herrera, quoted in Reardon, 1995).

NGOs can provide the opportunity for the articulation of women's interests independently of party politics and government. The UN Decade for Women encouraged the growth of a wide range of women's organisations and their ability to network at international levels. Perhaps the most important legacy of the Women's Decade has been the creation of an important political space for the proliferation of both informal and formal lobbies, grassroots associations and nation-wide movements for women (Kabeer, 1994). These movements have managed to forge world-wide networks and have acquired skills, self confidence and the capacity to organise for change (Sen and Grown, 1985).

Increasing the numbers of women in decision-making positions in formal political power does not in itself translate in to greater empowerment for women. Quantitative measures of women's participation in politics are inadequate as measures of women's empowerment. Measures to increase the quantity of women representatives need to be accompanied by measures to improve the quality of participation, in order to support women's empowerment and more attention is needed to ways of assessing qualitatively women's empowerment through political systems.

2.2.4 Empowerment, sexual and reproductive rights and health

The health sector provides an interesting case of how empowerment can operate on both an individual and collective level. Traditionally health programmes have focused on a top-down approach of service delivery. An empowerment approach to women's health emphasises women's individual sense of self-worth connecting to the value they attach to their own health (linked to 'power within'), women's individual decision-making over access to health care ('power to') and women's collective empowerment through organising to make health services more accountable and to increase women's choice, decision-making and control over their bodies ('power with').

Links between empowerment and health in general and specifically for women are receiving growing recognition. Research has highlighted the relationship between powerlessness and susceptibility to ill-health, and the health-enhancing capability of empowerment, defined as 'control over destiny,' at both individual and community levels (Wallerstein, 1993). These links are also gaining recognition in international development agencies. For example, a WHO position paper on health education links community participation to empowerment as a means of promoting healthier individuals and environments (WHO, 1991). The WHO position paper on women's health produced for the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing states:

The empowerment of women is a fundamental prerequisite for their health. This means promoting increased access for women to resources, education and employment and the protection and promotion of their human rights and fundamental freedoms so that they are enabled to make choices free from coercion or discrimination. (WHO, 1995: 8)

The international women's health movement stresses women's health and empowerment as goals in their own right and not as a means to reduce fertility. For example, the Women's Declaration on Population Policies, and DAWN's Population Policies and Reproductive Rights Project, emphasise the empowerment of women, as well as gender equality, including men's responsibility for their own sexual behaviour and fertility (Garcia Moreno and Claro, 1994). The large number and diversity of organisations covering women's health themselves represent the process of women's empowerment. In many places women have moved from being a critical voice on the margin to being influential participants in programme and policy debates at both national and international levels.

The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) stresses the links between health and empowerment (see Box 7). CEDPA's approach emphasises both 'power to' and 'power with' aspects of empowerment although it is not clear how many of their activities in practice are able to move to levels which go beyond individual decision-making. It is not clear also how the link specified between access to family planning services and increased participation in other household decisions is made.

Box 7: Family planning, reproductive health and empowerment; CEDPA

The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), a women-focused international organisation, is committed to an empowerment approach through a range of programmes, including:

- training programmes to develop women's management and leadership skills
- reproductive health projects
- youth programmes aimed at building girls' skills and reproductive health education
- supporting projects with a focus on women's legal rights and economic participation

CEDPA state that women's empowerment and reproductive health are inextricably linked. They argue that for family planning services to be effective and sustainable, they must be linked with individual and organisational capacity building, gender equality and community mobilisation. They support locally designed reproductive health programmes, managed by women leaders who have undergone CEDPA training programmes. These aim to expand women's participation in their communities and provide access to a full range of quality services. CEDPA also seek to involve men through a growing number of trained male-fieldworkers, peer counsellors, and combined management teams of men and women.

CEDPA have developed a conceptual framework highlighting four levels of ACCESS intervention and empowerment, to help with the integration of family planning and reproductive health and to further linkages with other programmes (See Appendix 3).

Level 1: Advocacy and community mobilisation activities are designed and implemented to address social and cultural barriers to women's access to and choices over family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH) services which affect their reproductive lives and personal well-being.

Level 2: shows that access to FP/RH services, including linkages with other programmes, supports women in their capability to participate in, influence, or make decisions about household matters affecting their families and themselves.

Level 3: CEPDA envisage that women who have made effective decisions about family planning and health matters are also better able to make decisions about participation in activities outside the household. This involves 'solidify[ing] empowerment gains' within households and communities.

Level 4: emphasises the need for sustainable community-based organisations which will continue to support women and their communities with access to FP/RH and to engender a climate favourable to women's continued health, well-being, and self advocacy and determination.

Source: CEPDA, 1995, 1996, 1997

Promoting women's reproductive and sexual rights goes to the heart of gendered power relations at the individual and household level. Empowering women in this area implies tackling internalised oppression, sensitive issues around sexual behaviour, and the complexities of decision-making and bargaining power in interpersonal relationships. However, women who lack economic autonomy may be in a weak position to refuse sexual services, or be reliant on sexual partnerships or even prostitution for their livelihood and security.

The feminist empowerment and 'women's right to choose' language has to some extent been adopted by the population control lobby for instrumental ends (i.e. the promotion of contraceptive use and fertility reduction goals) (Smyth, 1994). In this context, empowerment can be narrowly equated with women's rights to have access to family planning services (contraceptives) without necessarily tackling the context within which reproductive and sexual decision making occurs, or broader issues of women's bargaining power and participation. This illustrates the need for greater clarity in defining empowerment as a goal and the dangers of confining a focus on empowerment to one particular area of activity.

3. INDICATORS OF EMPOWERMENT

3.1 Measuring empowerment

The claims for women's empowerment to be the goal or ultimate objective of many development policies and programmes leads to a demand for indicators of empowerment, both to reveal the extent to which women are already empowered, and to evaluate if such policies and programmes have been effective towards their stated aims. There are a variety of ways in which indicators of empowerment can be developed. Each have some value, but none can be taken as complete measures, because the nature of empowerment as a multi-faceted concept means that it is not readily quantifiable.

It is helpful to divide indicators of empowerment into two categories: those which attempt to measure women's empowerment at a broad societal level, in order to gain information and make comparisons, and those which are developed in order to measure the effects of specific projects or programmes. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) of the Human Development Report (HDR) (UNDP, 1995) falls into the first of these categories. Indicators developed in the context of credit programmes in Bangladesh provide an example of the second (Hashemi *et al*, 1996).

3.2 Broad indicators of women's empowerment

3.2.1 The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)

The Human Development Report (1995) states empowerment as one of the four essential components of the human development paradigm, the others being productivity, equity, and sustainability. Empowerment is described as people fully participating in the decisions and processes that shape their lives. It introduces two new indices, the gender empowerment measure (GEM) and the gender-related development index (GDI). The GDI attempts to measure countries' achievements in the basic capabilities covered by the HDI, taking note of the inequalities in achievement between women and men, and penalising for inequality. Countries with greater gender disparity in basic capabilities (life expectancy, educational attainment, and income) will have low GDIs compared to their HDI.

The GEM is a composite indicator which looks at women's representation in parliaments, women's share of positions classified as managerial and professional, women's participation in the active labour force, and their share of national income. It aims to examine whether women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision making. The HDR states that while the GDI focuses on the expansion of capabilities, the GEM is concerned with the use of those capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities of life.

The GEM shows that access to basic needs, economic, education and health, does not in itself automatically mean empowerment for women. This is revealed by the fact that a number of countries have very low GEM values compared with their GDI values. These include France, Japan and Greece, United Kingdom, Ireland and Spain. Developing countries with very low GEM values compared to their GDI values include the Republic of Korea, Turkey, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates and Mauritius.

Nor does high GDP per capita necessarily equate with high GEM values. In East Asia and Southeast Asia, some countries, including Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore rank much higher in terms of GDP per capita than in GEM, with, for example, Korea, ranking 28 in GDP per capita but 90 in the GEM. Economic and political participation (as measured) is often low in these countries accounting for low GEMs. Some developing countries have higher GEMs than some developed countries. For example, China, Cuba and Costa Rica have higher GEM values than Japan or France.

Because of lack of available sex disaggregated data, GEM is not available for all countries. Also, lack of comparability between the ways in which data is defined and collected between different countries means that using GEM to compare the degree of women's empowerment in across countries is not appropriate. Rather, it can be used to monitor, over time, progress in improving women's involvement in economic and political life and disparity between other development indicators and empowerment in particular countries. It is a useful additional indicator to other macro level figures, which may highlight gender gaps in development and suggests a need for reorientation of programme priorities.

However, it has limitations in that, for example, quantitative measures of political participation in formal politics may not accurately reflect the degree of power which women are able to exercise (see 2.2.3 above). Moreover, degree of participation of women in professional and managerial roles reflects mainly advancement of middle class women.

3.3 Programme-related indicators of empowerment

3.3.1 Empowerment indicators in credit programmes

Other attempts to devise indicators for women's empowerment, define women's empowerment more on the personal rather than the institutional level. This can produce culturally specific indicators. For example, Hashemi *et al* (1996), in their research on rural women's empowerment in Bangladesh concentrate on the individual experiences of women as they interact both within the community and the village community. Confronted with the problem of how to translate conceptual categories into identifiable, observable, empirical indicators, they choose to concentrate on the individual in order to ensure detailed observations of the subtleties involved in societal transformations (see Box 6).

Box 6: Programme-related indicators of empowerment

Hashemi *et al* (1996) undertook ethnographic research in six villages for four years to measure the effects of programmes on the empowerment of women. Two villages were Grameen Bank villages, two were BRAC villages, and the other two had no credit programmes. They used a model based on eight indicators of empowerment which were:

- mobility; economic security;
- ability to make small purchases;
- ability to make larger purchases;
- involvement in major household decisions;
- relative freedom from domination within the family;
- political and legal awareness;
- and involvement in political campaigning and protests.

These were assessed by questions, for example to indicate empowerment in mobility, the respondent was asked if she had ever gone to the market, medical facility, movies, or outside the village, and then given a point if she had, and a bonus point if she had gone there alone. For economic security, the respondent was given one point if she owned her house or homestead land, or any productive assets or savings, and an additional point if she used her savings for business or money lending. For political and legal awareness, points were given for example, for knowing the names of government officials and for knowing the law governing inheritance. Using questions like these in each of the eight categories, a composite empowerment indicator was produced. The more points a respondent has scored, the more empowered she was deemed to be. Hashemi, Schuler and Riley, using this methodology, conclude that the longer that a woman is a member of either BRAC or Grameen Bank, then the more likely it is that she will be empowered according to their composite indicators.

Empowerment indicators can also be used to compare the success of different programmes in empowering women. Ackerley (1996) suggests using borrowers' knowledge of accounting for loan activity as a measure of empowerment in credit programmes. 'Knowledge of accounting' was measured by interviewing the borrowers to ascertain how much they knew about the input costs, product yield, and profitability of the loan-funded activity. The interviewee was scored with a one if she could answer the set of questions, and with a zero if she could not. Ackerley uses this measure of empowerment to devise a model which shows the likelihood of an individual being empowered through borrowing according to which organisation issued the loan, and what type of involvement the woman had in the loan-funded activity. In this way, different organisations programmes (in this case Save the Children, Grameen Bank, BRAC) can be compared for their effectiveness in achieving empowerment goals. Ackerley uses the results of analysing empowerment in this way to conclude that the credit programmes which are most successful in empowering women are those which encourage and enable women to participate directly in the activity funded by their loan.

3.3.2 CIDA's empowerment indicators

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has developed a range of indicators of women's empowerment, both quantitative and qualitative. They state that projects with empowerment objectives should specify the type of empowerment (e.g. personal change in consciousness, change in social and economic order), the rough time scales within which the project objectives will be accomplished, the numbers of people to be affected, and the degree to which they will be affected. Many of their empowerment indicators are process indicators. CIDA break down empowerment into legal, political, economic and social empowerment, for the purposes of quantitative indicators. They also suggest a range of qualitative indicators to accompany quantitative ones (See Appendix 4 for further details of these indicators) (CIDA, 1996).

CIDA argue that because of the complex nature of measuring empowerment, qualitative and quantitative indicators need to be underpinned by qualitative analysis. Some key questions for the qualitative analysis suggested are:

- How have changes in national/ local legislation empowered or disempowered women or men (e.g. concerning control over resources such as land)?
- What is the role of local institutions in empowering/disempowering women/men?
- Is the part women as compared to men, are playing in major decisions in their locality/household increasing or decreasing?
- Is there more acknowledgement of the importance of tasks customarily carried out by women, e.g. child care?
- How are women organising to increase their empowerment, for example against violence?
- If employment and education for women are increasing, is this leading to greater empowerment?

3.3.3 Empowerment and participatory evaluation

Development planners are often searching for easy schedules, quantifiable targets and simplicity while addressing very complex situations (Wierenga, 1994). While planners need to be able to distinguish between efficient and inefficient uses of limited resources, it is difficult to measure equality-related objectives which do not lend themselves to numerical representation (Kabeer, 1994). What constitutes empowerment for women may be very context specific: an activity may be seen to be empowering in one context and not empowering in another. Therefore, context and programme specific indicators for empowerment should be developed. For those organisations who wish to promote and encourage women's empowerment, participatory forms of monitoring and evaluation, based on analysing the objectives,

successes and problems of a project with those involved, might be a more appropriate or complementary approach to the use of standardised indicators (*ibid.*).

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND STRATEGY

Adopting women's 'empowerment' as a policy goal in development organisations implies a commitment to encouraging a process of more equitable distribution of power in society on personal, economic and political levels. It implies increasing women's control over their lives both individually and collectively and their participation and influence in institutional decision making.

However, unless empowerment is clearly defined and the strategies or processes whereby it is to be translated from policy to practice specified, empowerment becomes a vague goal or meaningless buzzword. Without clear definition of the term, in the particular contexts in which they are working, development organisations run the danger of merely renaming old top-down approaches as part of an empowerment policy, without altering the content and character of their programmes or examining the need for changes in organisational culture and process required.

Most empowerment focused projects have been local and small scale and implemented by NGOs. The tendency of NGOs to focus on projects at the micro-level can result in a failure to appreciate the wider economic and political context (Oxfam, 1995). The adoption of an empowerment agenda by large donor agencies presents particular possibilities and constraints which differ to those faced by a small NGO with empowerment aims. Larger institutions are faced with the challenge of how to 'scale-up' grassroots participation and empowerment initiatives.⁹

Whilst development organisations can develop frameworks and tools for institutionalising an empowerment approach in projects and programmes, ways of supporting the wider **process** of women's empowerment in society may be less clear to design or evaluate. Processes of social, economic, political and cultural change do not have clear beginnings, middle and end, or follow clear-cut linear progression and outcome (Oxfam, 1995). Within institutions there may be tensions between a broad goal of women's empowerment, and meeting formal institutional procedures. The points outlined below address this concern.

The analysis here suggests a number of strategic considerations for development organisations in adopting a women's empowerment approach:

1. Where women's empowerment is stated as a policy goal it should be defined or explained. Because empowerment is a complex concept and arguably over-used term, it is necessary to use it with clarity and focus. The different understandings of power and their implications in terms of approach are useful in this context (see Table 1). Empowerment is a useful concept because it emphasises the idea of women as active agents in, rather than passive recipients of, development strategies. It also

⁹ See John Gaventa in Blackburn, James (ed.), forthcoming

draws attention to the fact that the lives of poor and marginalised people, and the communities in which they live are shaped by political processes involving power, inequality and oppression. Empowerment should be used to bring these processes of power (and strategies to resist them) into focus, not to obscure as a vague slogan (Rowlands, 1995). Care is needed that the language of empowerment is not be adopted instrumentally as a means to reach other goals.

2. Strategies for promoting women's empowerment need to be integrated into development programmes.

Policy definitions of empowerment should be translated into specific strategies in the context of development programmes. The 'Women's Empowerment Framework' adopted by UNICEF and other agencies may be helpful in the design, implementation and assessment of programmes and projects aiming to promote women's empowerment. However, there is no quick 'technical fix' to adopting women's empowerment as a goal.

3. Empowerment is relevant to all programmes/projects and should not be confined to one area of development activity. The multifaceted character of empowerment implies the need to examine its implications in all dimensions of women's lives.

4. Different aspects of empowerment (e.g. political, economic, legal, physical) should not be addressed in isolation. Links between different aspects of empowerment need to be considered in programme planning and implementation.

5. The participation of women in planning at all stages is essential if development programmes are to be empowering.

More work is needed to devise means for wider and more meaningful participation by women in development planning. Participation fora may provide an opportunity for facilitating a process of a group or community's own analysis of need and means for transformation. Attention should be given to including consciousness-raising aims as part of participatory techniques.

6. Since the context is crucial to understanding processes of empowerment, indicators of empowerment need to be devised specific to programmes.

This will be most useful if indicators are generated through a participatory process. Both qualitative and quantitative indicators are important and should in addition be underpinned by qualitative analysis.

7. Mainstreaming policies within agencies and policies/programmes to support empowerment in the work of agencies should be linked.

Internal agency adoption of gender mainstreaming is often described separately from agency gender policies promoting women's empowerment. The links between strategies of gender mainstreaming and of women's empowerment need further consideration. It may be particularly important to establish links with external organisations working specifically for women's empowerment such as autonomous women's organisations, when WID/gender is integrated throughout an agency.

8. Support for women's organisations is a key strategy in promoting women's empowerment. Women must empower themselves, and women's organisations are an important part of women's individual and collective empowerment. More work is needed to establish what kinds of women's organisation are most effective for women's empowerment and to look for ways to support organisational development that empowers their members. Support for women's organisations may be financial, but must also involve helping to create networks, and establish connections between autonomous women's organisations and those in key positions of power. Funding mechanisms which minimise the bureaucracy in funding women's initiatives need to be further developed.

9. Promoting empowerment also involves examining organisational culture, structures and processes and identifying where these may conflict with empowerment goals, e.g. in terms of accountability. Efforts should be made to address these organisational issues, through, for example, retraining in participatory approaches, increasing the accountability of the organisation to beneficiaries, particularly poor women, increased flexibility in funding procedures and greater transparency in relationships with communities and organisations.

Appendix 1: UNDP and women's empowerment

UNDP's Gender in Development Goal explicitly uses the language of empowerment. Gender mainstreaming of all UNDP activities is promoted as a means to achieve this goal which includes:

- facilitating national development planning and United Nations system co-ordination to implement the Beijing Platform for Action;
- integrating gender analysis and gender equality practices into poverty elimination policies and programmes;
- facilitating and extending policy dialogue on sustainable human development issues to both Governments and civil society so that this dialogue includes all relevant gender dimensions;
- advocating and promoting the empowerment of women in political and economic decision-making at all levels from the household to national government and in local, national and international administrative structures.

The UNDP's Gender in Development Policy (GIDP) has been developed to assist regional bureaux and programme countries achieve the UNDP goal. This policy has a two pronged approach; firstly mainstreaming gender, and secondly, the advancement of women. It builds on the areas identified by representatives of women's organisations from around the world in the course of recent world conferences: a) fostering an enabling environment for the advancement of women; b) promoting the empowerment of women. Fostering an enabling environment is stated in terms of encouraging gender-sensitive legal and policy frameworks, assisting women to gain control over social and economic assets and resources, and promoting gender-sensitive poverty indicators, macro-economic frameworks and sector analyses. UNDP proposes to promote the empowerment of women through:

- promotion of women in policy and decision-making processes and positions;
- emphasising women's income-generating activities;
- providing women with access to empowering facilities (such as education, orientation and training of all kinds).

The GIDP also emphasises the objective of constituency-building and partnerships through identifying relevant constituencies, and networking with them in order to strengthen linkages with development partners in civil society.

Appendix 2: Mainstreaming gender in UNICEF: the Women's Empowerment Framework

UNICEF has adopted the Women's Empowerment Framework, developed by Sara Longwe, as an appropriate approach to be used in mainstreaming gender. The framework states that women's development can be viewed in terms of five levels of equality, of which empowerment is an essential element at each level. The levels are:

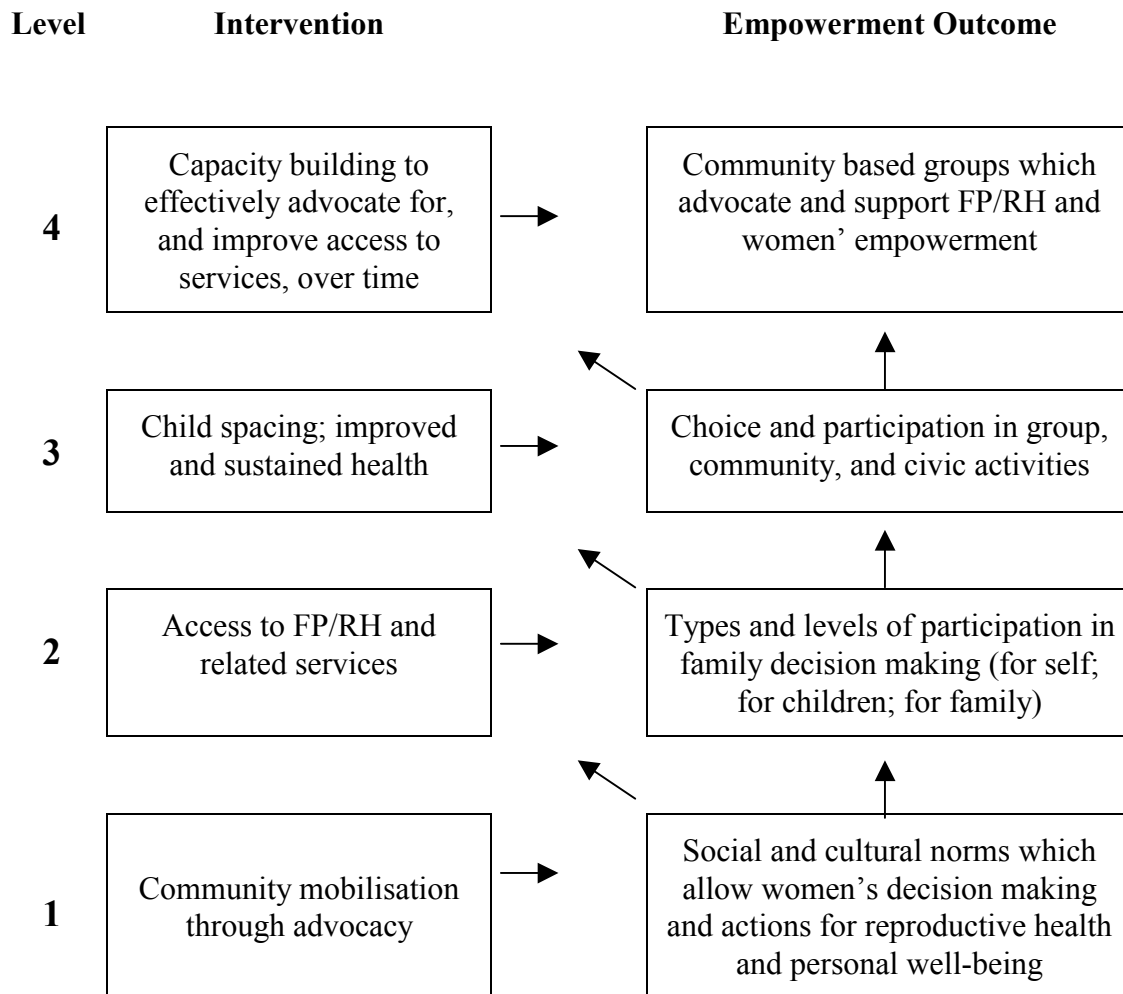
1. **Welfare:** this addresses only the basic needs of women, without recognising or attempting to solve the underlying structural causes which necessitate provision of welfare services. Women are merely passive beneficiaries of welfare benefits.
2. **Access:** equality of access to resources such as educational opportunities, land and credit is essential for women to make meaningful progress. The path of empowerment is initiated when women recognise lack of access to resources as a barrier to their growth and overall well-being and take action to redress this.
3. **Awareness-raising:** for women to take appropriate action to close gender gaps or gender inequalities, there must be recognition that their problems stem from inherent structural and institutional discrimination. They must also recognise the role that women themselves often play in reinforcing the system that restricts their growth.
4. **Participation:** this is the point where women take decisions equally alongside men. Mobilisation is necessary in order to reach this level. Women will be empowered to gain increased representation, by organising themselves and working collectively, which will lead to increased empowerment and ultimately greater control.
5. **Control:** The ultimate level of equality and empowerment, where there is a balance of power between women and men and neither has dominance. Women are able to make decisions regarding their lives and the lives of their children and play an active role in the development process. The contributions of women are fully recognised and rewarded.

Source: UNICEF, 1994

Appendix 3: CEPDA

The Relationship of Family Planning/Reproductive Health to Women's Empowerment

A Conceptual Guide to ACCESS Interventions and Synergy



Appendix 4: CIDA's indicators of empowerment

Legal empowerment indicators include:

- the enforcement of legislation related to the protection of human rights;
- number of cases related to women's rights heard in local courts, and their results;
- number of cases related to the legal rights of divorced and widowed women heard in local courts, and results;
- the effect of the enforcement of legislation in terms of treatment of offenders;
- increase/decrease in violence against women;
- rate at which the number of local justices/ prosecutors/ lawyers who are women/men is increasing/decreasing;
- rate at which the number of women/men in the local police force, by rank is increasing or decreasing.

Political empowerment indicators include:

- percentage of seats held by women in local councils/ decision-making bodies;
- percentage of women in decision-making positions in local government;
- percentage of women in the local civil service;
- percentage of women/men registered as voters/ percentage of eligible women/men who vote;
- percentage of women in senior/junior decision-making positions within unions;
- percentage of union members who are women/men;
- number of women who participate in public progress and political campaigning as compared to the number of men.

For economic empowerment, changes should be noted over time:

- changes in employment/unemployment rates of women and men;
- changes in time use in selected activities, particularly greater sharing by household members of unpaid housework and child-care;
- salary/wage differentials between women and men;
- changes in percentage of property owned and controlled by women and men (land, houses, livestock), across socio-economic and ethnic groups;
- average household expenditure of female/male households on education/ health; ability to make small or large purchases independently;
- percentage of available credit, financial and technical support services going to women/men from government/ non-government sources.

Social empowerment, changes over time of:

- numbers of women in local institutions (e.g. women's associations, income generating groups etc.) to project are population, and numbers of women in positions of power in local institutions;

- extent of training or networking among local women, as compared to men; control of women over fertility decisions (e.g. number of children, number of abortions);
- mobility of women within and outside their residential locality, as compared to men.

In addition to these quantitative indicators are a series of suggested qualitative indicators comprised of indicator questions to assess empowerment:

- To what degree are women aware of local politics, and their legal rights? Are women more or less aware than men? Does this differ by socio-economic grouping, age or ethnicity? Is this changing over time?
- Do women and men perceive that they are becoming more empowered? Why?
- Do women perceive that they now have greater economic autonomy? Why?
- Are changes taking place in the way in which decisions are made in the household, and what is the perceived impact of this?
- Do women make decisions independently of men in their household? What sort of decisions are made independently?

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