Power – a Matter of Give or Take?

A Minor Field Study of the Empowerment Work of Bangladeshi NGOs

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the empowerment potential of non-member based development NGOs. I argue that there is a need to be more aware of the underlying concept of power when talking about empowerment to this end a framework for analysis, identifying different kinds of power is developed.

The method used is a qualitative field study located in Bangladesh. Two organisations that conduct empowerment work with the poor are the objects of study. The material is collected through observation and qualitative interviews in the field. Documents such as project proposals and the organisations' information material are also used.

The results show that there is potential for empowerment. However it is ambiguous and contingent upon the relationship between the beneficiaries and the organisation which is also a relationship of power.

Key words: NGOs, empowerment, power, participation, conscientisation.

Characters: 61 143

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Acknowledgements

List of Abbreviations

NGO   -   Non-Governmental Organisation
SASUS   -   Seba Artha Samajik Unnayan Sangstha (NGO)
UD   -   Unnayan Dhara (NGO)
UNDP   -   United Nations Development Programme
USA   -   United States of America

Map of Bangladesh

1 Introduction

Empowerment has become a fashionable word in development cooperation lately. It is included in an array of project plans and is promoted by major development agencies. The definition of empowerment is somewhat elusive and scholars as well as practitioners seem to define it differently according to political conviction, level of analysis and the goals give. An elasticity which perhaps further adds to its popularity along with the fact that most people perceive it as something positive. Not to mention its increasing attraction with donors. However, along with this popularity appears the risk of stretching the concept to a point where it encompasses activities which are called empowering without a deeper analysis of what it actually means.

In what has traditionally been referred to as the developing world, many of the organisations which include empowerment in their activities work with poor and disadvantaged people (Cornwall, 2002:13 – Stiles, 2002:835f). Many of them receive funding from external agents such as state development agencies and international organisations (Stiles, 2002:836f), are run by an executive committee of some kind, have paid staff and the people which are the target of their activities are seldom active members of the organisation (Westergaard, 1994:5).

This poses a possible problem/paradox in relation to the empowerment work that these organisations mean to conduct. At the heart of the term empowerment lies the concept of *power*: those who do not have it shall get it. But how is this achieved in an organisation where those who are meant to be empowered might not be able to influence the work of the organisation? This is in turn linked to the assumption that these kinds of organisations are functioning in a democratic manner, thus acting as a "school of democracy". To what extent do internal power relationships have an impact on the results of different projects and aims that these organisations have?

On a more theoretical level it raises questions about the properties and the distribution of power as well as the relationship between structure and agency. It is my belief that these questions also need to be carefully considered on the practical level as it is the foundation on which activities are based. It is thus important to clarify which kind of power one is dealing with and how it is affected by the work that is carried out.

This leads me to the following research question:

> *Which kind of empowerment can be achieved through non-member based non-governmental organisations?*

1.1 Methodology

The purpose of the study is to reach a deeper understanding of empowerment work by NGOs. This entails an examination of how the organisations function, their activities and the subjective perceptions of empowerment that the beneficiaries and functionaries hold. To reach this objective a qualitative study is the most appropriate as this allows for a deeper analysis of relationships and meanings than would a quantitative study (see for example Devine, 2002:197ff). The main tools used for the qualitative study are interviews and observations of the beneficiaries and NGO-representatives.

To answer the question above I have chosen to do a case study of the empowerment work of some Bangladeshi NGOs. Bangladesh was ranked 137th out of 177 in the 2004 UNDP Human Development Report (UNDP, 2006) and in 2000, half of the population lived in poverty[1] (World Bank, 2006). As a result, the country has been given a lot of attention in strategies to reduce poverty and there is a large number of NGOs which are active in the development sector. Many of these have adopted the term empowerment in their vocabulary.

I have chosen to study two of these organisations. The results from the research conducted on their activities are used in the analysis as practical examples of empowerment work. They serve as illustrations of the theoretical discussions and the purpose is not to compare them in terms of success or correctness. Rather it is an attempt to bridge the gap between the academic world and that of practitioners.

I have had the opportunity to study one of the organisations for a longer period than the other. Most of the interviews have also been conducted with staff and beneficiaries[2] of this organisation. Rather than choice, this is the outcome of external events[3] but the results obtained from the other organisation are still useful for contrast and/or collaboration in the analysis.

It is important to keep in mind that even though all the organisations target the poor, not all poor are the same and their specific target groups differ somewhat: one works mainly with the landless poor; one with poor who generally have at least some land. However, as stated above, the purpose is not a comparison. Also, the organisations' perception of the beneficiaries is a crucial part in the understanding of the empowerment work that is being undertaken. The differences in their approaches, which is to some extent reflected in their different target groups serve a purpose in illuminating the diverse approaches that can be and are being used in development work today. By contrasting them and identifying their similarities, some key points can be extracted.

The scope of the study does not encompass the organisations and their activities in their entirety. It is limited to those aspects which are most relevant and interesting to the analysis.

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[1] Below the national poverty line.

[2] I use the term *beneficiaries* here, as the people who take part in the activities of those organisations that I have studied are not members of the organisation. The organisations usually refer to them as either beneficiaries of group members, which is also used alternately in the text. For a more detailed discussion on this issue see section 3.2.1.

[3] See section 1.1.4.

1.1.1 Observation and Interpretation

Observation is a method often used in field studies, but seldom specifically accounted for. As the main part of my research consists of field visits, it is an essential part of my study and I will therefore briefly touch on the subject here. The purpose of the field visits have been to conduct interviews and to see the reality of people's lives: how and where they live, how they behave in relation to other people et cetera. This is important in order to be able to interpret the interviews on a deeper level than merely from what people say. A limitation to this is of course intersubjectivity: my analysis is a result of *my* perception of how things are, which might not be entirely accurate: some pieces of the puzzle could be missing or I could have made misinterpretations. With this in mind, the essence of a qualitative study is to *understand* and this cannot be done without interpretations of reality which can always be debated, but nevertheless constitute a major part of the analysis.

It also needs to be said that a white woman alone in Bangladesh, especially in the countryside attracts quite a bit of attention. Often, I was surrounded by people staring at me and following me around. This made impartial observation virtually impossible, as I often was the one observed, rather than the other way around.

1.1.2 Interviewing – Challenges and Considerations

Interviewing is my main research method, through which I gather information from NGO representatives as well as from project beneficiaries. The purpose is to gather information from the subjective viewpoint of the person interviewed. The interviews are semi-structured, which means that the subject has been decided by me and I ask questions relating to the predetermined area of the interview, however the questions are adapted to pick up on interesting things in the answers and it is as such less rigid than a questionnaire but more structured than a conversation (see for example Kvale, 1999). It means that I, as the interviewer, am the one in charge, rather than it being a mutual exchange. As my subject of study is power, I here feel the need to discuss the unequal relationship that this kind of research entails (Kvale, 1999:20ff). The fact that I am the one, who asks the questions and determines the subject in combination with the perceived authority that formal education often brings, may in many ways influence the result of the study. However, with a limited time-frame, I have found interviewing to be the most effective tool in getting access to as much information as possible. By being aware of the dilemma, I also hope to be able to eliminate its major distorting effects.

The interviews with beneficiaries have been conducted at and after formal group meetings. This means that they have not been gathered by the organisation with the specific purpose of being interviewed by me. I have chosen this method with the intention of as far as possible ruling out any bias in the selection by the representatives of the organisation, who naturally have an interest in showing the most successful cases.

I use group interviews as an introduction to the people involved in the project. It is also useful for analysis of group dynamics. Trying to triangulate and cross-check

the results from the different interviews, individual interviews are mainly conducted with people who have been observed and interviewed in group. This does not entirely rule out the problem of only being one researcher and the issue of intersubjectivity, but minimises the negative impact of it within the scope of this study.

The persons interviewed have been asked to volunteer. As a result, there are probably relevant views that have not come to light through this method as the opinions of a person who wants to participate and speak their mind might differ considerably from those who do not want to speak. This is a risk that has to be taken though, as no one can be forced to freely speak their mind. Also the views of those interviewed are highly likely to be held by more people than themselves and therefore the results cannot be invalidated because of this factor alone.

To protect the anonymity of respondents, I do not disclose any names. In relation to very sensitive issues, where there is a special interest in preventing the disclosure of the identity of the respondent, only general references to the source are made in the text.

The particularities of conducting interviews in Bangladesh merit some attention here. First, it is practically impossible to do individual interviews as there are always people around, often wanting to take part in the conversation. Privacy cannot be upheld with any less than removing the interviewed person from these surroundings, which is neither possible nor desirable as people tend to freeze up if the interview becomes too formal. Second, large parts of the field work was conducted during Ramadan[4], which meant that people at times were very tired and not very talkative, which for example could easily be misinterpreted as fear of speaking one's mind.

1.1.3 Material

Material for the background and theoretical framework consists of academic literature, practitioners' guides and evaluations. Also, printed documents such as project plans, periodical reports and overviews of the organisation have been used in the analysis together with observations and interviews.

When dealing with the latter cluster of written material, it has to be kept in mind that the material has been produced by a certain person/persons for a specific purpose. It may, for example, contain information about activities or views that does not accurately reflect the reality of day-to-day work. Consequently, it is important to read these documents as part of the context of the organisation: as indicators of aspirations or willingness to please donors as well as accounts of ideology and activities.

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[4] Throughout the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast during daylight.

1.1.4 Cultural Considerations and Working with an Interpreter

As the Bangladeshi culture is fundamentally different from those that I have previously experienced, it is important to be aware of the differences and possible cultural misunderstandings. This has to some extent been avoided through contact with Swedish people in Bangladesh, who have been working in the country for some time and are familiar with the differences and know the common mistakes made when interpreting the context. Also, in Sweden I have had help from several persons who have been to Bangladesh, visiting these kinds of organisations and who have shared their experiences with me. There is of course always the risk of these opinions being inaccurate or simply not relevant for the context that I have been working in. However, I have tried to use them as an introduction.

An interpreter can be an asset in interpreting not only language but also culture. In want of a personal deeper understanding of Bangladeshi culture I have needed this kind of interpretation and I believe that the research have benefited from it. However, one needs to be aware of the fact that this interpretation is informed by the person's background and that there can be other interpretations as well.

I worked with two different interpreters: one woman, who has a background as a field worker in development projects and a man, whose background is mainly in the media sector. None of them are professional interpreters, as my budget wouldn't allow that. With this followed some issues which can be of interest to others planning to conduct similar work. Their knowledge of English was rather basic and this meant that the very precise exercise of formulating questions became something of a challenge, as I had to express myself in a manner which the interpreter would be able to translate correctly. Also, without professional training in interpretation their formulations in English was limited and influenced by their own use of the language. This has made methods such as counting the occurrence of certain words impossible as the translations are not accurate word by word, but rather a recounting of what the interviewed person has said.

I also encountered some problems relating to my authority as a researcher, when the interpreter during interviews at times questioned which issues the person interviewed would be able to answer. Also, I often found that when I posed an open-ended question, the interpreter would give alternatives or in other ways influence the range of potential answers. To some extent I had anticipated these kinds of problems and tried to pre-empt them through briefings of my research plan and by giving codes of conduct. However, this was apparently not enough and in the end I found myself with a lot of results that I could not use.

Finally, I would like to mention the political situation in Bangladesh during the time of my study. I was there from October to early December 2006. At the same time an interim (caretaker) government was to be installed in preparation of the election in early 2007. This caused intense political controversy which was displayed through mass demonstrations and blockades of the capital, Dhaka. This not only led to the cancellation of several of my planned field visits, but also made it very difficult to change my location of study to Dhaka (where I was) as it was almost impossible and potentially dangerous to move outside the area where I stayed. This has of course had an impact on the amount of material that I have been able to collect, but

I believe that it has not been all negative as it has given me insight into the political scene in the country and the context in which the organisations conduct their work.

1.2 The Organisations

Below is a short description of the organisations. This is meant as an introduction and more in-depth accounts are integrated in the analysis when relevant.

Seba Artha Samajik Unnayan Sangstha (SASUS)
Location: Delduar, Tangail
Beneficiaries: 3000 female and 540 male

In translation the name means: Development Organisation for Socio-Economic Services. The focus is local and rather "traditional" in NGO terms. The beneficiaries of the organisation are mainly poor, rural women and their key goals are: structural poverty alleviation, the improvement of women's status, creating work opportunities for the poor, building self reliance, increasing public participation, increasing people's capacity and capability of working for fulfilment of their rights.

Their main methods are empowerment through both conscientisation and participation. The activities include micro-credit programmes, income generating activities (projects such as hand looming, fishing), emergency relief and motivational as well as practical training. (SASUS, 2005)

Unnayan Dhara (UD)
Location: Jenaidah
Beneficiaries: 3560 female and 1725 male

The focus of the organisation is poor farmers. Their main aim is to create a sustainable agricultural development so that these farmers can be self-sufficient and raise their own living standards. Part of this vision is a gender perspective where women's participation in agriculture and income generating activities are advocated and promoted. The main activities are social mobilisation, education, human resource development and income generation. (UD, 2006)

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

Next, the theoretical basis of power and empowerment will be discussed and relevant previous research will be put forward in chapter 2. Here, a framework for the following analysis will also be developed. The analysis consists of two parts where different aspects of the organisations are related to the theoretical framework: chapter 3 which elaborates on the issue of participation and chapter 4 which focus on the activities of the organisations. Finally, in chapter 5 the main results are presented.

2 What is Empowerment?

In this chapter I will try to bring some clarity to the discussion on empowerment and its relation to power. I will also give a definition of empowerment and a framework through which the analysis will be carried out.

The concept of empowerment is used in many different contexts and can be traced back primarily to the civil rights movement in the USA in the 60's. It has been used in the debate on welfare and citizenship in the Western world for some decades. It has also been adopted by feminists as a method to raise the status of women and by activists in the South in an effort to reclaim ownership over development. Lately it has also found its way into mainstream development activities. Consequently the research on empowerment spans over a multitude of disciplines and areas. One of the main appeals of the concept empowerment is its lack of clear definition. This has its root cause in the lack of consensus over the definition and understanding of power. It is almost universally understood as something positive and its elasticity makes it suitable for usage in an array of contexts. As a consequence there are almost as many definitions of empowerment as there are students and practitioners of it. Many also fail in giving a clear definition thus leaving it open for interpretation.

Here I will concentrate on power and empowerment in the area of development and give an account of the key points brought forward by academics in this field.

2.1 Power

Any understanding of empowerment also entails an understanding of power. Therefore, an examination of the concept of empowerment has to begin with an account of power. Here it will be done through a discussion on different kinds of power. This is an effort to try and bring some precision to what it means to speak of different kinds of empowerment.

Traditionally, power has been viewed as the negative force of coercion and control (Lukes, 2005). It has been associated with resources (both material and immaterial), where access to and control over resources has been understood as a prerequisite for power and lack of resources consequently has been the definition of powerlessness. This is usually referred to as *power over* as it involves a relationship of domination and subordination where the resources determine who dominates and who is dominated (Oxaal et al, 1997:1). From this economist point of view, power becomes a zero-sum game, where one's gain of power/resources automatically means the loss of someone else's.

Another way of perceiving power has been put forward by Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Haabermas in their work on social relations and citizenship (Stewart, 2001:33ff). Rather than seeing it as something which necessarily has to be exercised *over* somebody else, their understanding is that collective action is generating power through communication (Ibid.). Communication in this view produces consensus and understanding through which common interests are distilled (Stewart, 2001:42). The main thought is that by creating common interests no person's or group's interests are put aside and dominance is by consequence impossible. This is usually termed *power to* but for analytical clarification, I prefer the term *power with* which is also used in Oxfam's training manual on gender (Oxaal et al, 1997) as this puts more of an emphasis on the collective aspect. Power with can thus be interpreted as an innate capacity, whereas power over exists as a function in a relationship (Lukes, 2005:34).

Power to can instead be seen as the capability of making decisions and solving problems (Oxaal et al, 19997:1). This understanding of power connotes possession of skill and knowledge as tools to solve problems. It also involves the range of choices available, actual as well as the perception of possible choices (Kabeer, 2004:24).

On a more individual level there is *power within*, which relates to self-confidence and self-worth (Kabeer, 2004:19 – Oxaal et al, 1997:1). Consciousness is an important aspect of this kind of power as the individual needs to be aware of his or her capabilities and possibilities to be able to act upon them.

Box 1: Manifestations of Power

Power over: Negative, coercive force. Relation-ship of domination/subordination.

Power with: Collective force. Organising with a common goal.

Power to: The ability to solve problems and make decisions.

Power within: Self-confidence & awareness.

(Kabeer, 2004:19 - Oxaal et al, 1997:1)

2.2 Agency vs. Structure

The controversy over the relationship between agency and structure is fundamental to any analysis of power. Structures can be seen as either enabling or restricting agency. They are interlinked and affect each other mutually: structures are the result of agency, but once in place they set the boundaries of future agency. Structures and institutions are often used interchangeably.

Advocates of empowerment tend to focus on agency as a way to change oppressive structures. Agency is often seen as a component in, or indicator of empowerment: it is the ability to act (Cruikshank, 1999 - Kabeer, 2004).

Foucault has had a great deal of influence on the debate on power and structures with his view that power is not an attribute but is created and exists only in relationships between people (Tew, 2002:160). According to Foucault's reasoning, power permeates all of society and can never be eradicated (Lukes, 2005:88ff). The relationships of power is what creates subjectivity and thereby can be said to create who people believe they are and how they understand the world around them (Stewart, 2001:18). If agency is seen as more important than structures, power logically lies with individuals: it is individuals that hold power and use structures to distribute or hold it. However, this can be done on an individual as well as a collective basis. If, on the other hand, structures are perceived as the determining aspect, the individual's possibilities to affect hers or another's position within a structure are very limited.

The understanding of the nature of power (as an attribute or a relationship) is instrumental in empowerment as the necessary measures for achieving empowerment are quite different depending on whether it is seen as a property to be won or as a relationship to be changed. Seeing power as an innate capacity (see 2.2), suggests that it can be "awoken" in those that are perceived as not exercising this power. This is problematic in two ways: first, *who* can awaken it and second, who is *responsible* if it is not exercised? There is an apparent risk of blaming the powerless for their own incapacity of acting or reversely blaming structures for everything, thus effectively negating the possibility of independence of the powerless.

The level on which power is operating is also important: the institutional, close relationships/household or individual (Oxaal et al 1997:1 – Rowlands, 1995:103). This has bearing on where the effort of empowerment should be concentrated and is closely associated with the understanding of the relationship between agent and structure.

2.3 Choices

Even though there are many different definitions of empowerment, most of those working in the field agree that it is a process (Kabeer, 2004:19 – Oxaal et al, 1997:6 - Rowlands, 1995:103, Strandberg, 2001:3). One of those is social economist Naila Kabeer. She also means that empowerment is intimately connected with choices. She has identified a range of choices where power is of the essence and she calls these "strategic life choices" (2004:18f). They can be matters such as who to marry and when, the length of children's schooling, where to live and what to do in life (Kabeer, 2004:19ff). Power is the ability to freely make these choices and lack of power is thus the reverse (ibid.). Following this argument she defines empowerment as:

> "…an expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously been denied to them."

> (Kabeer, 2004:19).

Kabeer identifies resources as a component in making choices: resources (material or immaterial) are the conditions under which choices are made and an increase in resources thus means greater ability to choose (2004:19ff). Through this connection between choices and resources she clearly links the discussion to poverty, as it is often defined as lack of resources (Kabeer, 2004:19). Resources are distributed unequally in society through different structures or norms which regulate who gets access to what (Kabeer, 2004:20). For empowerment to take place an increase in access to resources is not enough: there also needs to be a challenge of and a change in the underlying structures that regulates the range of choices available (2004:26ff).

Kabeer uses the term choice, rather than the more traditionally used interests (see for example Lukes, 2005), but the meaning is essentially the same: choices are made according to interest. This opens up for a discussion on what interests are and how they are defined. If interests are purely subjective, objective or a mixture thereof leads to very different interpretations of how empowerment can be achieved and what it means. If interests are seen as needs, they are objective and can therefore be unknown to the person who has them (Lukes, 2005:82f). If interests are purely individually defined, everybody has to define by themselves what a good life is and that view cannot by definition be wrong as the needs of every person is subjective, i.e. individually defined (Ibid). These differing views has great implications for how interests are best served and whether someone else can play a part in defining or furthering a person's or a group's interests. According to Oxaal et al, empowerment:

> "…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."

(Oxaal et al, 1997:6)

This perception of empowerment involves an understanding of choices as being individually defined or at least identified. Empowerment is also seen as a process of claiming the right to fulfil these interests and needs.

2.4 Definition and Framework of Empowerment

Above, different components to analysing empowerment have been presented. In this section, a working definition of empowerment and a framework for analysing it will be put forward.

Though differently formulated Kabeer's and Oxaal et al's definition are essentially the same. Furthermore, both have chosen not to use the word power in their formulation. Presumably the reason for this is the concept's lack of definition as well as the possible negative meaning it could be appointed. Instead they formulate the definition by using an interpretation of power. The process of empowerment in these definitions involves breaking or otherwise overcoming domination and subordination in order to live freer lives according to one's own preferences. However, within the definitions of power used lie several of the different

manifestations of power discussed in section 2.2 which have been conflated into one definition. As the purpose of this thesis is to investigate which different kinds of empowerment that can be achieved, a more differentiated view of the concept is necessary.

There are already quite a few definitions of empowerment and I do not want to further add to the conceptual confusion. However, I do see a need to bring back the underlying notion of power into the definition. Above, four manifestations or types of power are discussed: "power over", "power with", "power to" and "power within". Logically, a process of empowerment could then entail an increase in or expansion of any of these types of power. Though, as empowerment has been developed largely as an ideological concept used in relation to the dichotomy of powerful/powerless, it has taken on an innate meaning of resisting or breaking the negative form of "power over" in the process of bringing power to those who do not have it. As an alternative, "power with", "power to" and "power within" can be defined as positive in the sense that they are not exercised *over* others. Consequently empowerment can be seen as an intrinsically constructive process whereby negative power is resisted and positive power is increased. Following this logic, empowerment cannot take place through an increase or shift in power over. Thus empowerment can be defined as *a process of increasing power within, to or with*. This is a quite broad definition, but is necessarily so because empowerment is a wide concept. It can be an individual as well as a collective process. I have developed a framework for identifying different kinds of empowerment using indicators derived from the characteristics of power presented in section 2.2. These are presented in box 2 below.

"Power with" as collective action, involves dialogue as a means of solving conflict, finding agreement on common goals and how to achieve them. This is also related to the nature of relationships with others. As "power to" involves the ability of problem solving and decision making, it requires skill and knowledge of the problem at hand. It also requires knowledge of the range of choices available. This can be linked to the availability of resources as they determine which choices actually exist. Power "within" is manifested through self-confidence, which can be achieved through increased knowledge and awareness of one's rights and capabilities.

Box 2: Indicators of Positive Power

Power with: Dialogue – conflict resolution

                      Cooperation

                      Common action

                      Changed relationships

Power to: Skill/Knowledge

                      Range of choices

                      (Resources)

Power within: Knowledge/Awareness of rights and capabilities

By not specifying these indicators further, they can be adapted to the context in which they are to be applied.

Resources and agency can be seen as relating to all of these manifestations of power, although resources play a special role in "power to". Ability, capacity and choice, also relate to all three categories showing that defining empowerment in these terms does not clarify which kind of power is in operation.

Different kinds of empowerment can be identified by analysing the activities through the incidence or absence of these indicators. In practice, these manifestations of power cannot be as clearly separated as has been done here since they are all linked together and affect each other. This categorisation should thus be seen as an analytical tool in an attempt to bring some clarity into the subject of empowerment and should not blind the observer to possible links or overlaps between the categories.

As power can operate on different levels, then so must empowerment be able to take place on different levels: the individual or personal, the family or close relationships and the institutional or structural level. Again, these cannot be seen as separated as they all are interconnected. It can be argued that these different levels are a better tool for analysing different kinds of empowerment and it has also been done (Kabeer, 2004 – Oxaal et al, 1997 – Rowlands, 1995). However, it is difficult to tell whether empowerment on one of these levels will eventually lead to empowerment on another as well. For this reason I have chosen not use these levels as a first point of entry in the analysis, even though I will touch on the subject.

In the following two chapters this framework will be used to analyse the organisations and their work in terms of empowerment.

3 The Rules of Participation

In organisations that are non-member based, the terms and conditions of participation are important in relation to their empowerment work. Participation can be seen as the relationship between the organisation and those who take part in their activities – participate. Another meaning of the word is participatory approaches which are a family of different methods for bringing people into development. In this chapter, first the meaning of participation will be discussed along with its implications for empowerment. Then the organisations' practice of participation and its potential for empowerment is discussed. This is followed by a critical view of how the target groups are identified and the underlying power relationships that this entails. Finally the main points will be further elaborated upon.

3.1 The Meaning of Participation

Participatory approaches to development are seen as a way of achieving change from the bottom-up rather than the other way around (Kelsall et al, 2003:293). Participation can be divided into two different types: as a *means* or as an *end* (Parfitt, 2004:538f). These different types stem from the form of participation – in projects which are donor driven, participation is often used as an added ingredient in order to give the project legitimacy and make use of local knowledge (Ibid.). Participation is then used as a tool to achieve efficiency and sustainability and leave existing power relationships in place (Ibid.).

When participation is seen as an end in itself it is usually conceived of as transformatory – the goal is to achieve some kind of ownership and management of different issues affecting the community, be it soil and water management or the election of political representatives (Parfitt, 2004:540). This second type of participation is seen as a part of empowerment: through participating, people are able to define their needs/interests and act upon them. It is a matter of becoming a subject in development who is able to act, i.e. has agency (Williams, 2004:564). It can also be interpreted as becoming aware of the possibilities to act outside of the specific project.

SASUS and UD both claim to use participatory approaches. The meaning of which is twofold: the aim is for people to *participate in development* and to achieve this, they are also to take part in project development through *identifying needs* and to take part in the implementation (SASUS, 2005, UD, 2005). The concept is understood primarily as an end where the goal is for people to "own" the project and thereby also the development that is assumed to take place as a consequence (Interviews with

SASUS and UD staff). In terms of empowerment the ability to identify needs and to take part in development in some way could then be seen as an expansion in "power to" as it requires knowledge of the initial problem and also a solution to it. Depending on how it is executed, participation could also increase the "power with" if it includes some kind of deliberation on definitions and prioritisations among those taking part. How this works in practice will be considered in section 3.2.

3.2 The Practice of Participation

> "We find a problem. We have a meeting and everybody in the meeting
> talks. We consider different aspects and the suggestions come from
> everybody. There are many suggestions and from these we get the
> solution"

> (Interview with the Executive Director of SASUS, 2006-10-14)

The possibility for increased "power to" and "power with" through participation in project design was introduced in section 3.1. In this section, practice will be examined with the purpose of investigating whether the theoretical possibilities for power are actually realised.

Project proposals and interviewed staff of SASUS and UD, all talk of participation in project design, implementation and evaluation. However, when asked to provide details of how this is done, the answers given are sketchy. What can be concluded is that participation in this context consists of "providing" the problems and possible solutions, which are then discussed at meetings within the organisation, were the participants are no longer the target population but staff and in the final stage, board members. The effects of this are difficult to evaluate without further insight into the process. There is an apparent will to base activities on the actual needs or interests of the target group (Interviews with staff of SASUS and UD). The problems that they voice are listened to and activities are developed to alleviate these problems. This provides people with an opportunity to analyse their situation which can be empowering by giving insights into what their problems actually are and how they might solve them. Being listened to can also be an empowering experience through asserting self-worth and the confidence to speak (Ledwith, 1997:72) thus increasing the "power within".

Young makes a distinction between external and internal inclusion, i.e. whether one is truly allowed to participate and influence (2000). The argument is that being included does not necessarily change the possibilities for influence and can instead actually serve to legitimate de facto exclusion, also for those on the inside (Ibid.). This possibility needs to be considered in relation to these organisations in relation to the fact that after voicing the problems and coming up with solutions to these, the organisation takes over as the staff starts sketching on projects proposals and available resources sets limits to what can be included. To some extent this practice takes away from the power that the previous step could implicate. Also, there seems to be a tendency among those in the target group to come up with solutions that

require the organisation, rather than themselves to take action, such as providing seedlings, equipment, materials, credit and training. In some instances there have also been requests that the organisation provide employment (Interview with Executive Director & Coordinator of SASUS, Delduar 2006-11-17). This shows that the "power to" is limited to voicing complaints, which others are expected to solve, indicating a relationship of dependence with the organisation.

3.2.1 Constructing target groups

As the organisations are not member based, the beneficiaries or participants are generally recruited to join the activities of the organisation. This creates a special relationship between the organisation and those that it seeks to empower. In a study on the relationships of empowerment with focus on the poor in the USA, political scientist Barbara Cruikshank criticises the often careless usage of the term empowerment as something which is intrinsically good (1999:67ff). She states that the powerless are constructed as a concept by those seeking to empower (Cruikshank, 1999:72). The relationship of empowerment is thus itself saturated with power and has to be critically scrutinised (Ibid.).

The poor or the powerless as a group do not exist a priori; it has to be defined in order to be able act upon. Someone has to decide who is part of the group and who is not. The creation of the disempowered or the powerless as a category is only possible if there is an opposite category: the powerful (Mohan & Stokke, 2000:252). It also runs the risk of obscuring power relationship within the group (see for example Kelsall, 2003:299ff - Mohan & Stokke, 2000:47f). The target group is constructed as in need of help from the organisation, which is the rationale behind its whole existence. This sets the frame for what those participating are perceived to be capable of in advance, thus limiting that capability within the framework of the organisation (Cornwall, 2002:8 – Cruikshank, 1999:71ff).

Through interviews as well as documents it becomes clear that the power relationship between the organisation and the target group is not problematised. The goal of the organisation is to work for those that need them, who are labelled as "landless", "poor", "destitute", "farmers" etc. (SASUS, 2005 – UD, 2006, Interviews with SASUS and UD staff). When asked what their duties are, a majority of the field workers say that they "help the poor" (Interviews with SASUS and UD field workers). To help in this context indicates an unequal relationship. This serves to construct the poor as powerless and in need of help to become empowered.

The field worker and the organisation can and does have an important role in bringing people together and encouraging them to look critically at their poverty and issues concerning how they live their lives. This leads to the conclusion that one needs to be critically aware of the possibility of the organisation/field worker becoming someone who imposes views of the world on those that he or she is meant to be "helping". This can become just another, perhaps even more subtle form of oppression.

3.3 Further discussion and conclusions

Cruikshank makes the argument that choosing and constructing the powerless as a category is in itself an act of power (1999:71ff). This points to the main dilemma of non-member based organisations. As it is the organisation that chooses who its beneficiaries are, it also holds the power of deciding who can participate and who cannot. Furthermore, it seems as if the organisation has a motive for holding on to the control as this defines its parameters of work. This can also be related to the relationship to financial donors who only gives money to certain activities.

The target groups are chosen, rather than formed out of their own sense of necessity. They are not invested in the organisation, but tend to see it in rather functionalistic terms. With this comes the risk that people use the organisation to further their own aims to the detriment of others.

Finally there is an inherent paradox in talking about participation. It insinuates that someone else is taking the initial initiative and is the main driving force behind. This is what people are then expected to participate in. Participation is not the same thing as ownership of the process.

4 The activities

How the organisations understand empowerment is dependent on their world view and the analysis of the problem that they are setting out to rectify. The main problem that all three of them single out is inequality (Phulki, 2006 - SASUS, 2005 – UD, 2006). However, they set out to tackle this in different ways. SASUS' analysis of the problem can be divided into three main cathegories: material lackings, lack of justice and oppressing social norms and customs (SASUS, 2005). UD on the other hand see that lack of knowledge and skill is making farmers dependent on agricultural companies (UD, 2006). This is coupled with a lack of organisation and knowledge of the political decisions that influence their lives which makes them incapable of exerting influence (Interviews with UD staff).

The activities of the organisations spread over a wide spectrum but they have some commonalities in that they consist of conscientisation or awareness on the one hand and skill training on the other – depending on the focus of the NGO. These activities will be looked at in this chapter, examining their potential for empowerment.

4.1 Conscientisation and awareness training

Conscientisation can be defined as process of becoming aware of what is imposing limits in people's lives (Ledwith, 1997:66) Paulo Freire introduced the concept of as an empowerment strategy of the poor in the 1970's (Freire, 1990). Although debated, his idea of the need of the poor to learn about the world and the causes that hold them in poverty in order to break free and create their own development still lives rather intact (Ibid.). Freire's argument is based on the notion that to be free, those who are oppressed are the ones who need to oppose this order (1972:21). Because they have internalised the oppression they are at the start unable to fight it and therefore need to change their consciousness (Freire, 1990:22ff). This is done through recognising the causes of oppression and how it dehumanises people (Ibid.). This can be interpreted as moving from being an object to becoming a subject with agency - the ability to make a change.

A core activity of both organisations is awareness (SASUS, 2005 – UD, 2005 & 2006 –Interviews with SASUS and UD staff). This is articulated in similar ways as:

> "… be aware of root causes of their impoverishment…"

> (UD, 2006)

> "…we make them aware of their lives and their rights in different issues. Through that process of finding out their position and their rights, they can fight for it."

The primary methods used by UD are farmers' gatherings and street theatre (UD, 2005 & 2006, Interviews with UD staff). These are events that are adapted for disseminating information to as many as possible. The agenda is to make farmers aware of their rights as well as the practices of the WTO and agricultural companies (Interview with UD staff). The awareness that the participants achieve through these kinds of activities are, though based on their realities, not bringing them into the process. Rather they are expected to learn.

SASUS also works through groups where the members are meant to be discussing the problems they encounter in their everyday life (Interviews with SASUS staff). They are also given social awareness training, in which they are taught about their rights and the reasons why they are poor and that this state can be changed (Interviews with SASUS staff and beneficiaries). This is conducted by a field worker or a group member that has received previous training from the organisation (Ibid.). By using the term training, the power relationship is revealed: this is not knowledge that they can find or formulate by themselves, but have to be taught. The knowledge is then expected to empower them to criticise the present order or to demand fulfilment of their rights.

Conscientisation is seen as a means to empowerment: with knowledge and understanding come the tools to change the situation that one finds oneself in, i.e. one is empowered to make a change. Becoming able to understand and put a reason behind what is happening in their lives, can be seen as a process of increasing "power within" by creating confidence in an ability to change this and a possibility for "power to" through identification of the problem. However, identification alone does not implicate "power to" – a next step of a change in the perception of choices available is also needed. Great care needs to be taken in how this understanding is brought about and whether or not it encourages an independent analytical thinking.

Conscientisation can also be associated with a next step of social mobilisation, where the collective organise in order to produce a change – "power with". This development is envisaged by UD, as they are trying to inspire the farmers to organise in order to become a group with the ability of influencing national and international political decisions affecting agriculture (UD, 2005, Interviews with UD staff). However, they find this development to be slow, as the farmers are showing little interest in such an organisation (Interviews with UD staff). This indicates either that the farmers do not fully understand their potential or are not willing to take the consequences of political involvement. Either way, the awareness that they have achieved through UD is not immediately bringing about "power with", perhaps because it is not an issue of which they have ownership.

4.1.1 Group activities

Freire introduces the need for education as a means of reaching critical consciousness, but he recognises the often unequal relationship between teacher and student (1972:45ff). To overcome this, he asserts that the hierarchy between the two has to be dismantled and that both have to simultaneously fill the role of both teacher and student (Ibid.). Only then can a critical thinking be developed, which is in stark contrast to how Freire perceive the outcome of traditional education, which he sees as fostering blind acceptance of truths which are given by the authority of the teacher (Ibid.). The main argument that he makes is that the key to change lies with those who are oppressed and that it cannot be given by those who are a part of the oppressive structure. To be able to facilitate conscientisation, one has to be part of the oppressed group and form a relationship of mutual learning (Freire, 1990:48f).

In the activities described above, awareness is taught to the participants – the "truth" has already been discovered and shall then be imparted to the target group. This "truth" does not necessarily have to be inaccurate, but is not allowing independent formulation and discovery of the connections between the lives of the group members and that of others.

Both SASUS and UD use the group formations as a method of organising their beneficiaries. The purpose of the groups differ somewhat. For UD it is a tool for spreading knowledge about ecological/sustainable agricultural methods and health issues. For SASUS they are a forum for discussion on different topics affecting people's lives. The group members also save money and have the ability to take micro-credits. In both organisations it is field workers who are responsible for organising group meetings.

The UD group members are rather passive in relation to the field worker – he or she talks at length about a subject which the group members are expected to learn. The members have the opportunity to ask practical questions and to discuss problems they encounter. The groups are first separated by sex and the gradually put together to form mixed groups (Interview with UD field worker). This practice seems to have had a very positive effect in the daily lives of the group members as it has served to make visible the contribution of the work of women (Interviews with UD beneficiaries). Through techniques in vegetable gardening they are also able to make a material contribution to the household and sometimes also sell some of their produce (Interviews with UD beneficiaries). All of those interviewed meant that their economic well-being had increased considerably by applying the knowledge from the group meetings. This indicates an increase in "power within" for the women and also "power to" in that they are able to make changes in their lives and their choices are expanding as an effect of improved household economies. For example they can now choose to either buy seed or produce it themselves. However, it should be noted that the ideology of the organisation is to "break the dependence on agricultural enterprises" (Interviews with UD staff) thus promoting one of the options as superior. All of those interviewed also testified to a greater understanding of others and less conflict within the group as it mixes people with different economic status and political affiliation. This points to a greater "power with" as people replace conflict with some degree of harmony. It does not however

automatically entail that they organise actively in order to achieve a common goal, although it does to some extent reduce hindering factors.

In SASUS' groups an array of topics are being dealt with: women's status, dowry, education, rights, agriculture etc. The topics are chosen by group members or by the field worker when he or she feels the need to address something in particular. It is then often related to the practical trainings that they have received. The professed aim is to produce an environment where the group members can solve issues by themselves through identifying the problem and finding the solutions together (Interviews with SASUS staff). To some degree this is achieved but there are some limitations. First, by observing the group meetings it becomes apparent that also here is the field worker very dominant. The issues discussed are not being problematised but rather it seems to be a repetition of something that they have learnt. In some groups it is the chosen group leader that is almost the only one who talks. It is also the group leader that gets to participate in trainings at the head office and then disseminate to the group what has been learnt there (SASUS, 2005 – Interviews with SASUS staff and beneficiaries).

> "Before joining this group, the men did not allow us to go outside. Now we can."
>
> (SASUS Group interview 5)

This quote illustrates some of the development that the group members have experienced through their involvement in the groups. They also tell of decreased domestic violence, near eradication of the practice of dowry and how almost all children are enrolled in school and stay longer than they did before (Interviews with SASUS beneficiaries).

In interviews SASUS group members show a considerably higher awareness of power and poverty issues than those of UD. They also talk of changed relationships to the powerful elites and that they are now being respected and listened to as a consequence of knowing their rights and being able to act united upon them (Interviews with SASUS beneficiaries). Some also want to engage socially and/or politically to be able to work for the poor and give them a voice (Interviews with SASUS beneficiaries).

> "Unity is our power. It is our courage"
>
> (SASUS Group interview 2)

The empowerment potential in these activities seems to lie more with the effects of group formation, than with the actual activities. By being part of a group, the members seem to increase their cooperation skills and in the case of SASUS also act as a group, thus indicating "power with".

On the other hand both organisations tend not to trust the group members to reach awareness by themselves and the perception of the role of the field worker among group members is of someone who has knowledge and teaches or helps to solve conflicts (Interviews with SASUS and UD beneficiaries). This is far from the ideal envisaged by Freire.

4.2 Skill training

Both organisations profess to a holistic approach to development (SASUS, 2005 – UD, 2006). As their beneficiaries are poor and uneducated, skill training is seen as a way of enhancing capabilities to manage everyday life and also to some extent facilitate income generating activities (Ibid.). This is something that is requested by the beneficiaries (Interviews with SASUS and UD beneficiaries and staff) and is thus not imposed on them, but the training is limited to certain areas as a consequence of the limitations in either the ability to provide the training or in the scope of the organisation.

SASUS provides skill training in cooking, health and sanitation; economic planning, livestock and poultry rearing, mother and child health (SASUS, 2005 – Interviews with staff and beneficiaries). The aim of improving these skills is to reduce ill health and provide a way of raising the household income and reducing its expenditures (Ibid.). This is also a way of creating independence from having to rely on the good will of others where patron-client relationships often result in the poor working for substandard wages (Ibid.).

UD's skill training is mainly focused on sustainable farming techniques such as seed preservation, ecological fertilisers and pesticides (Interview with UD staff). They also provide some health and sanitation training, nutrition and fuel saving cooking stoves (Ibid.). The general idea is to promote farming techniques that are more environmentally sound than those practised at present and to break the dependence on agricultural enterprises that sell expensive seed and chemicals to the farmers (Ibid.). The group members are generally first very sceptical of the value of these methods and skills, but usually warm up to the idea when people around them get positive results (Interview with UD field worker).

Does this skill training provide opportunities for empowerment? It sets out to break existing harmful power relationships, thus having the possibility of at least reducing "power over". The range of choices available to those participating expands as a consequence of an expansion in resources through increased income and better health indicating an increase in "power to". Also in changing the relationship between the beneficiaries and those who they have been dependent on alters the foundations of the relationship and can work to increase the bargaining power of the dependent party, implying a positive change in "power within" as a consequence of reduced "power over". It is important to remember though that this doesn't necessarily mean a change in the underlying structures which put that relationship in place.

Some might argue that these kinds of activities serve to pacify those participating through raising their incomes and thus making them uninterested in

"real change". This highlights the divide between those focusing on physical resources as a prerequisite for change and those believing in a revolution of the poor. However, it seems a rather odd argument that the poor should be held in poverty in order to make possible a revolution. It is probably not a vision that most poor would concur with and raised living standards can be seen as a start of a slow revolution, where increased well-being and greater ability to voice interests and opinions gradually shifts power relationships in their favour, increasing all three types of positive power.

4.3 Conclusions

The results show that even though the activities are very driven and controlled by the organisations, they have some potential in giving the participants self-confidence and self-worth through knowing their rights. It is the knowledge of rights that is empowering here, rather than the process of reaching this knowledge. The greatest potential however, actually lies in the group formation itself.

Living standards are also being raised which increase the opportunities available. The question here is whether to see these changes as instrumental or the start of a process with greater potential than it seems to be showing at present.

In the problem analysis that the organisations make, as it is the basis for their existence, lies the assumptions that the target group needs help in empowering themselves or even that they need to be empowered by the organisation. The vehicle for this is the field worker, whose role is to help bring this about. The staff is labelled facilitators, but has very little training in facilitation, rather the training that they receive is practical, which enhances the risk of the field worker becoming someone who is an authority and who has a ready-made perception of who the beneficiaries are and what their problem is.

5 Conclusion

The question that I set out to answer in the beginning of this thesis was:

Which kind of empowerment can be achieved through non-member based non-governmental organisations?

In the analysis in chapter 3 it is shown that participation has the potential of empowerment. It can increase: "power with" by collective deliberations on and perhaps also solutions to issues; "power to" through encouraging people to analyse their problems and to find solutions; "power within" by having your opinion valued and being listened to. The main concern in relation to participation is the nature of the relationship between the organisations and its beneficiaries which is itself based on power inequality. Also the actual practice of the organisations show that the commitment to participation does not make them let go of all the decision making power.

In chapter 4 we see how the activities can be empowering. "Power with" can be increased by engaging people in group activities. "Power to" can be promoted through analysis of one's life situation and the possibility to act in order to achieve a change. Also knowing one's rights can become a tool in demanding their fulfilment. Through raising self-worth by knowing that those who are poor are not to blame for this and that they can achieve things for themselves, "power within" can be raised. The perhaps most surprising empowerment potential lies in the indications that it is belonging to a group that is empowering rather than the activities as such. Also the possibilities for standing up for one's rights once they are known might not be dependent on the way this awareness has come about, thus putting Freire's agenda for conscientisation into question.

The results show that the relationship between the organisation and its beneficiaries needs to be taken into very careful consideration. The perception of who the beneficiaries are and the structure of the organisation is setting limits to what can be achieved within these boundaries. This however, does not necessarily mean that no empowerment can be achieved.

This brings up questions such as: how do you "facilitate" empowerment without taking over or dominating the process? And: is it realistic to expect empowerment efforts to occur spontaneously by those in need of it?

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Interviews

SASUS

Staff:
Executive Director: Delduar 2006-10-14 and 2006-10-17
Executive Director & Coordinator: Delduar 2006-11-17
Coordinator: Delduar 2006-11-17
Field worker 1: Delduar 2006-11-19
Field worker 2: Delduar 2006-11-19
Field worker 3: Delduar 2006-11-19
Field worker 4: Delduar 2006-11-19
Field worker 5: Delduar 2006-11-19

Group members/Beneficiaries:
Group Interview 1: Lauhati Union 2006-10-14
Group Interview 2: Lauhati Union 2006-10-14
Group Interview 3: Lauhati Union 2006-10-15
Individual Interview A: Lauhati 2006-10-15
Individual Interview B: Lauhati 2006-10-15
Group interview 4: Lauhati Union 2006-10-16
Individual Interview C: Lauhati Union 2006-10-16
Individual Interview D: Lauhati Union 2006-10-16
Group Interview 5: Lauhati Union 2006-10-17
Individual Interview E: Lauhati Union 2006-10-17
Individual Interview F: Lauhati Union 2006-10-17
Group Interview 6: Lauhati Union 2006-10-18
Group Interview 7: Lauhati Union 2006-11-16

UD

Staff:
Executive Director: Jenaidah 2006-11-24
Coordinator: Jenaidah 2006-11-23
Field Worker: Jenaidah 2006-11-25

Group members/Beneficiaries:
Individual Interview 1: Jenaidah Union 2006-11-24
Individual Interview 2: Jenaidah Union 2006-11-25
Group interview: Jenaidah Union 2006-11-25
Individual Interview 3: Jenaidah Union 2006-11-25
Individual Interview 4: Jenaidah Union 2006-11-25

Appendix

Here, the general outline of the questions asked at interviews are presented.

Questions for NGO-Representative/Management Staff

1) How do the organisation function?
   - leaders
   - beneficiaries
   - internal democracy
   - financing
   - goals
   - program formation
   - working methods

2) What is the person's view on empowerment (participation & conscientisation)?
   - How long with the organisation?
   - What does empowerment mean?
   - What does participation mean? – is it working?
   - What does conscientisation mean? – is it working?
   - What is social mobilisation?
   - How can it be achieved?
   - How are people responding to the organisation?
   - What is your role?
   - (Are there any problematic issues?)

3) Have you met any resistance? –where, who?

4) What training does the staff have/get? (Different levels)

5) What is the most important issue for the organisation?

6) What are the problems for people in this area? (Bangladesh?)

7) What is power? Do you work with power issues?

8) What is poverty? How can it be fought?

Questions for Field Worker

1. Why did you start working for this organisation?

2. What are the biggest problems in this area?

3. What does your organisation's work consist of?
   - What is most important?
   - Are there more things that need to be done, which are not done at the moment?

4. How are projects planned/initiated?
   - Components
   - What is included/excluded?
   - From where do the ideas come?
   - For example the latest program/project?

5. How is it decided which areas/villages should be included?

6. Do you cooperate with other organisations/institutions?
   - Do you think cooperation is a benefit or an obstacle…

7. What are the similarities/differences to other organisations?

8. What do you do?
   - Role in the organisation / towards beneficiaries…
   - Main responsibilities…
   - Non-prescribed work/duties…

9. What is the function of the groups?
   - Benefits to the members…
   - Activities…
   - Ideas for the future?

10. What do the groups discuss?
    - How are subjects decided?
    - Do you introduce subjects?
    - What do you do if you feel that the group is discussing a subject that isn't relevant?
    - Are there any groups that function better than others and why do you think that is?

11. What does sustainability / independence of the groups mean to you?
    - Is it important?
    - How can that be achieved?
    - What are the level of skill/preparedness among beneficiaries?

Questions for Group of Beneficiaries

1) What is the situation for poor people?
2) Who is poor?
3) Why is a person poor? – who can change the situation?
4) What is the role of education?
5) Difference between men and women?
6) What do NGO's, politicians etc do?

Questions for Beneficiary/Group member

Name:

Sex:

Birth date/Age:Housing:

Siblings & Parents:

Ethnic background/Religion:

Education:

Occupation:

Married – how long?:

Children – age & sex:

Q1) Dowry in the marriage? How old is your spouse? Did you choose?

Q2) What is a day like? What do you do? Do you do the same things all year around?

Q3) Who else live with you/in the surrounding houses?

Q4) Who is the head of the family? Who takes care of problems?

Q5) Do you own any land? Do you cultivate it – with what? From where do you get seeds?

Q6) What are your sources of income? Can you sell any of your crop – how much do you earn?

Q7) Do you have any animals? Who takes care of them?

Q8) From where do you get water?

Q9) Do you go to the market? What do you do? Does anyone go with you?

Q10) Who is in charge of the money? Who decides what you buy?

Q11) How do you get food?

Q12) How many times a day do you eat? Who prepares the food? How – fuel?

Q13) Have you had any health problems?

Q14) Where do you go if you or anyone in your family gets sick? Is it an educated doctor?

Q15) Do your children go to school? How long do you want them to go? How long will they be able to go? Is schooling expensive for your family?

Q16) How do you want your children to marry? Who decides?

Q17) If I say power, what do you think of?

Q18) How did you first know about the organisation?

Q19) What was your first contact?

Q20) How long with the organisation?

Q21) Why did you join?

Q22) Are you with any other organisation?

Q23) What has the organisation done for you?

Q24) Have you taken part in any projects? – what did you do? –did they ask you what you thought?

Q25) Do you go to group meetings? – how often? – what do you do?

Q26) Who is in charge of the meetings – what do you talk about?

Q27) Do you talk at the meetings? Why/why not? What do you say? Do you talk about problems?

Q28) Have you talked about birth control – family size?

Q29) Do you use birth control? Who decides on that?

Q30) What are the main problems between man and wife? What do you argue about?

Q31) Do you talk about politics?

Q32) If I say politics – what do you think about?

Q33) Do you care about politics?

Q34) Have you ever voted? Will you vote in this election? Why/why not?

Q35) Have you taken any loans? Have you paid back? – how much/often?

What did you use the money for?

Q36) Are there other organisations in the area? – What do they do? – are you involved?

Q37) What where your parents' lives like? What has changed? Is it good or bad? Why has it changed?

Q38) Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Note: not all of these questions were used at every interview – they served as a basis from which appropriate questions could be chosen.