

An opportunity to go “here and there” on the empowering vehicle of education

- A minor field study of women’s empowerment through
education in Gerupuk, Indonesia

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Abstract

By utilizing the concept of empowerment and how education can serve as an empowering tool for women, this bachelor thesis aims to examine women's empowerment through education in the village of Gerupuk in south Lombok, Indonesia. The thesis is based on empirical material consisting of interviews with women from Gerupuk and representatives from Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), United Nation (UN) agencies, and the Indonesian government. In line with Jo Rowlands' theory of women's empowerment, this study accounts for core values, inhibiting and encouraging factors, and changes arising due to the interactions within the empowerment process through education. The field study indicates that women from Gerupuk who have completed nine years or more of education have become empowered by developing core values in their personal life, in relation to others and collectively. Empowerment showed not only to be equated with core values but also what happens as a result of developing them. Factors contributing favorably to the empowerment process and overriding the inhibiting factors include an increased ability to act in one's own interest and to acquire a wider array of opportunities for life choices.

Key words: empowerment, women, education, Jo Rowlands, Indonesia

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Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Purpose and question at issue	2
1.2	Previous research	2
1.3	Disposition	3
2	Methodology	4
2.1	Approach.....	4
2.2	The interviews.....	4
2.3	Material	5
2.4	Analysing the material	6
3	Theoretical Framework.....	7
3.1	Conceptualization of "women's empowerment".....	7
3.2	Jo Rowlands' Dimensions of Empowerment.....	8
4	Background	10
4.1	Education in Indonesia.....	10
4.2	The life of women in Gerupuk.....	11
5	Analysis	12
5.1	Women's ability to develop core values	12
5.1.1	Within the personal dimension	12
5.1.2	Within the relational dimension.....	14
5.1.3	Within the collective dimension	16
5.2	Factors regarding women's empowerment through education.....	17
5.2.1	Inhibiting.....	17
5.2.2	Encouraging	20
5.3	Changes due to the interactions	21
6	Conclusion	23

1 Introduction

Education is considered a strategic vehicle in order to empower people to develop themselves, and to improve the quality and function in their daily life (UNESCO: 1998). Education is considered a life empowering experience for all, and what people who are economically challenged need the most is empowerment. In other words, education is not only *for* empowerment; it *is* empowerment (Sen 1999:296). Education enables change and improvement, and makes it easier and encourages individuals to build personal opinions and take part in their society's economic, political, and cultural activities. People who receive no education or drop out of school early have limited chances of influencing their lives (WFP: 2007). Education not only gives people skills that help them make a living, it also opens up opportunities for them to think, communicate and experience life more fully (Gallaway & Bernasek 2004:16).

Empowering women through education is one of the most crucial concerns of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on gender equality, where the support of education for women is seen as the key pathway to strengthen their status within the family and in the society as a whole (UN: 2009). A basic education, especially for women and girls, is one of the most important means for economic growth and political and social development (WFP: 2007). However, many girls and women worldwide do not have the opportunity to achieve education and are therefore missing out on this “empowering vehicle.”

The Indonesian government has committed to the MDGs and the international agreement on Education For All (EFA), which guarantees every citizen to nine years primary education free of charge. Despite this, there is a gap between males and females in the field of education, which is clearly reflected in the number of illiterate women compared to men. In addition, at higher levels of education the drop out rate for women is greater than men, especially in poor rural areas (CEDAW 2007:37f). These differences are found in almost all regions in the country, one of them being Lombok in the province of West Nusa Tenggara. The median years of schooling for married women in the province is 4.6 years; the lowest in Indonesia, while 26.6 per cent of married women have no education at all (Statistics Indonesia 2002-2003). The area is prone to poor health and nutrition conditions, and inadequate education opportunities contribute largely to such a setting (WFP: 2009). The fishing village of Gerupuk in south Lombok is an example of a situation where there are not only differences between men and women's education opportunities; there are differences between women in general. Considering this imbalance, is it possible to identify empowerment among women who have had the opportunity to achieve education?

Gender researcher Jo Rowlands describes women's empowerment as a process operating within three interrelated dimensions; in personal life, in relationships

and within groups. The main outline of her theory determines each dimension to contain core aspects such as self-confidence, the ability to negotiate, and a sense of identity. To what extent these core values are developed depends on the encouraging and inhibiting factors identified within the process. If the core aspects of empowerment are encouraged and developed, women's self-perception will change and contribute to increased power.

1.1 Purpose and question at issue

Given that education is recognized as an empowering tool for women, the aim of this bachelor thesis is to examine women's empowerment through education, focusing on women from the village Gerupuk in south Lombok. This study sheds light on the issue of uneven educational opportunities for women and the effects it has on their lives. This research stresses the significance of women's education, its benefits to society as a whole, and importantly to the individual herself by allowing her to experience life more fully. Empowering women through education is one of the most crucial concerns of the MDGs on gender equality; hence this topic for research is a pressing issue. Rowlands' theory of empowerment serves as the theoretical framework for this study and according to her; three main factors are to be considered when examining women's empowerment. The research questions have been posed upon these factors:

- What abilities do women from Gerupuk have to develop core values within the personal, relational and collective dimensions of empowerment?

-What are the encouraging and inhibiting factors regarding women's empowerment through education?

-What changes can be recognized when women are empowered through education?

1.2 Previous research

In the last few years, the research domain of empowerment has increased within the political science and development work (Mosedale 2005:244). Many agree on education as an empowering tool for women, especially Swarna Jayaweera. Jayaweera examines the relationship between education and several aspects of empowerment in "*Women, Education and Empowerment in Asia*" (2001) a publication in which she studies factors surfacing from educational, social and economic structures and gender relations within the family. In "*Impact of investments in female education on gender equality*" (2002), Malhotra et al review

the empirical literature from a variety of social sciences and health disciplines to understand the impact of investment in female education on gender equality, women's empowerment and their wellbeing. Their review indicates that education is necessary but not a sufficient investment for achieving gender equality or improvement of women's wellbeing. In "*Women, Education and Empowerment: Pathways towards Autonomy*" (1995), women educators and researchers examine different education practices and their theoretical implications for empowering women. "*What works in girls' education: evidence and policies from the developing world*" (2004) by Barbara Herz and Gene Sperling summarizes the extensive body of research on the state of girls education in the developing world. The overall conclusion is straightforward; educating girls pays off substantially. The objective of the book "*Women, Education and Development in Asia: Cross-National Perspectives*" (1996) by editor Grace Mak deals with interrelated aspects of schooling in ten Asian countries, Indonesia being one of them. Within the book, the authors present a view of development, improvement, barriers and remaining problems for women's educational and social advancement.

This study aspires to contribute to the discussion on women's empowerment through education by examining the empowerment process due to education among women in Gerupuk, Indonesia.

1.3 Disposition

Following this introductory chapter on question and purpose at issue and previous research, chapter two presents the methodology used in the fieldwork. In chapter three the theoretical framework of this study is presented, firstly dealing with the conceptualization of empowerment and secondly by presenting Rowlands' dimensions of empowerment. Chapter four examines the Indonesian context by presenting background information on education in Indonesia and the realities of being a woman in Gerupuk, Lombok. The material drawn from the field study is discussed and analyzed in chapter five, where answers and opinions of the respondents will be woven into the discussion. The analysis is divided into three sectors; women's ability to develop core values in each dimension, inhibiting and encouraging factors within the empowerment process and the changes due to the interactions. Furthermore, they will relate to the research questions presented in chapter 1.1. Lastly, chapter six will summarize the study findings in conclusion.

2 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used during the field study, presents the interview procedure and the formulation of field questions, followed by a discussion of the material. It concludes by presenting the code and analysis of the collected material.

2.1 Approach

This thesis can be described as a hermeneutical qualitative case study due to its emphasis on human subjectivity and aims to find meaning and significance to social phenomena, in this case the empowerment of women through education (Lundquist 1993:41f). A hermeneutic approach also prioritizes an in-depth understanding of a case, the intention of this study. Within qualitative methods one is also interested in coherence and structures, description and understanding, whereby the researcher observes the phenomenon from the inside (Lundquist 1993:104f). A qualitative study aims to understand the reality through ones own perspective with its goal to discover the meaning individuals ascribe to their life and existence (Teorell & Svensson 2007:11). Education can either be formal or informal, and for the purpose of this thesis, education is to be referred to as formal, as all Indonesian citizens have the right to nine years of primary formal education. However, this does not downplay the role informal education may have on the empowerment of women.

2.2 The interviews

In order to examine women's empowerment through education and to answer the research questions, a total of 30 interviews were conducted, 16 with women from Gerupuk and 14 with representatives from NGOs, UN agencies and the Indonesian government in Mataram and Jakarta. Although this study focuses on these women's personal experiences, it was also necessary to include other informants as they provided a comprehensive account of the inhibiting factors within the empowerment process.

The selection of women from Gerupuk were based on two groups, one group which had completed nine years or more of education (Group A) and one group with less than nine years (Group B). For the purposes of this case study, the mandatory nine years of education for Indonesian citizens was used as a

benchmark. The purpose of the study is to examine the empowerment of women within Group A, with the stories expressed by the women within Group B contributing to a deeper understanding of the development of core values, outcomes and the empowerment process at large. Each group consisted of eight women between 18–25 years of age, all with similar socio economic backgrounds. Regarding participation by the organizations, “snowball” methods were mainly used where one person recommended another, who in turn recommended a third and so on (Marsh & Stoker 2002:205).

The interviews with the women from Gerupuk were all conducted in Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia). Even though I understand and speak Indonesian well, a translator was used during the interviews to ensure the legitimacy of the respondent’s answers, in case my vocabulary did not contain all phrases and expressions necessary. Five of the interviews in Mataram were conducted in Indonesian, where a translator also assisted, while the remaining interviews were conducted in English. Although assisted by a translator I found my knowledge of Indonesian to be a great asset as it helped me to approach, meet, and create a relaxed atmosphere with the respondents. This represents an essential part of the fieldwork, as the result of the interview is affected by the situation, the position of the interviewed and the approach of the interviewer (May 2001:174f).

Interviews can serve as an important tool when finding out what a set of people think, how they interpret an event, what they have done or are planning to do (Aberbach & Rockman 2002:673). The intention of the interviews was to encourage the respondents to talk freely about their experiences, views, and perceptions and bring forth spontaneous descriptions based on their own reality (Esaiasson et al 2002:298). All interviews with the women from Gerupuk were semi structured. A semi structured interview is based on a list of questions or topics that the interviewer needs to cover during the session and he or she plays an active role in the process, still allowing the respondent plenty of room to respond. There are different types of questions with the most significant difference between open-ended or closed ones (Jacobsen 1993:99). Open-ended questions provide a greater opportunity for respondents to organize their answers within their own framework, which increases the validity of the responses and showed to be the most suitable alternative for this kind of exploratory and in-depth study (Aberbach & Rockman 2002:674). The question sheet was based on criterion from Rowlands’ dimensions of empowerment, including core values, inhibiting and encouraging factors together with possible changes.

2.3 Material

A researcher analyzes the reality through material that includes an amount of data. This data represent samples of a reality, which is determined by the environment, personality, and methodology of the researcher. Evaluation of the material is a central task for the researcher and must be related to the methodology. In the first instance, the material constitutes a restriction of what is possible to achieve

(Lundquist 1993:107). An important distinction to be made is between material that already exists, for example texts and statistics and material, which the researcher creates through experiments and interviews. This thesis is primarily based on the first hand material collected through interviews with women from Gerupuk and representatives from NGOs, UN agencies and the Indonesian government in Mataram and Jakarta. To compliment this material and in order to collect background information, secondary sources such as articles, publications, documents, and annual reports from NGOs, and UN agencies were used. Some of the information was gathered through Internet sources. The web sites used were provided by large, well-known organizations and authorities and contributed valid material to the study.

2.4 Analysing the material

In contrast to quantitative methods whereby the material must be coded before an analysis can be done, qualitative methods are integrated and fabricated in a cyclic process (Svenning 1997:151). The analysis of the interviews with women from Gerupuk was achieved by categorizing the content from the theoretical framework; core values within the *personal*, *relational*, and *collective* dimension together with the identification of inhibiting and encouraging factors as well as changes. According to Rowlands, a set of questions can be selected for a particular context to identify areas for action that will enhance the empowerment process, where some of the questions concern an analysis of the core elements of the empowerment process (1997:130). The aim of the analysis is to uncover a deeper understanding of the respondents' realities and everyday experiences by interpreting their stories through the theoretical framework (Esaiasson et al. 2003:280). The starting point is idiographic; each phenomenon must be considered on the basis of its own conditions and without generalizing ambitions, even though a case study has the potential to contribute to the understanding of other cases (Bjereld et al 2002:76)

3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter begins with a discussion on empowerment followed by a definition of women's empowerment. It then presents the theoretical framework for this study; Rowlands' dimensions of empowerment, outlining core values, encouraging and inhibiting factors and changes due to the interactions.

3.1 Conceptualization of "women's empowerment"

"Empowerment" is used in many ways and in a wide range of contexts; therefore it is important to conceptualize the term. Empowerment can be understood as a social process where people either are empowered or disempowered in relation to others but also in relation to themselves over time. To be disempowered or disadvantaged allows the current power relations to work in a way that affects the possibility to make choices and affects the wellbeing and opportunities of people in a restraining manner (Mosedale 2005:243f).

Empowerment can be related to development theory and has predominantly been discussed in that context. Parallel to, and influencing the debates on development theory, is the emergence of theories concerned with women and development, and later gender and development (Rowlands 1997:3f). In the context of gender and development, the meaning of empowerment is not precise, but commonly defined as a *process* rather than an end product (Rowlands 1997:7). This is also the case within the disciplines of social work and education whereby empowerment is perceived as a process involving some degree of personal development and the moving from insight to action (Rowlands 1997:15). Empowerment of women aims to raise the group's awareness, among themselves and others about the access to equal rights and possibility to influence their situation in society (Bunch & Frost 2000:554).

Rowlands is particularly interested in women's empowerment and suggests the process involves changes in women's personal life, in relationships and collectively (Rowlands 1997:89). According to Rowlands, individuals are empowered when they are able to maximize the opportunities available to them without constraints (Rowlands 1997:13). A definition suitable for this study as it identifies what constitutes women's empowerment is:

A process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination (Malhotra et al 2002:6).

3.2 Jo Rowlands' Dimensions of Empowerment

How then is empowerment experienced and demonstrated? Drawing on two case studies of women's development projects in Honduras, gender researcher Jo Rowlands examines in her dissertation *Questioning Empowerment* how empowerment occurs and why, what factors actively encourage it and the influences that inhibit its development (Rowlands 1997:27). Rowlands determines that empowerment operates within three dimensions; the *personal*, *relational* and *collective* dimension, with an emphasis on the different contexts in which empowerment is experienced and demonstrated. Each dimension contains core values that contribute to the individual's transformation, represented as the "key" that opens "locks" on the empowerment door (Rowlands 1997:111). The dimensions also contain circumstances that encourage or inhibit the process and changes emerging as a result of the interactions, all representing crucial factors when examining empowerment. The following is a closer look at the dimensions of empowerment and their core values.

1. *The personal dimension* includes developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing effects of internalized oppression (Rowlands 1997:15). The core values within this dimension are the development of *self-confidence*, *self-esteem* and *sense of agency*, whereby you are an individual who can interact with your surroundings and make things happen (Rowlands 1997:111f). Another aspect of personal empowerment is the development of a capacity to think and analyze, and to develop one's own opinions. As confidence gradually increases and women begin to get a sense of their own worth as human beings and members of the community, their ability to express themselves increases, and so, too, does their ability to understand and when necessary disagree with other people's opinions. Besides an increase in confidence and self-esteem, personal empowerment also involves women finding ways of making time for themselves, so all their energy and effort is not going into daily survival and maintenance of the family (Rowlands 1997:79).

2. *The relational dimension* emphasizes established relationships between individuals. To have a sense of empowerment to other people is associated with and to a large extent, dependent upon, self-confidence, self-esteem and a sense of agency. It also depends on the development of the individual's *ability to negotiate*, *communicate*, *get support* and *defend her rights*, the core values within this dimension (Rowlands 1997:119). Empowerment in this dimension not only involves changes in the woman's own expectations and behavior, but also changes in the expectations and behaviors of her partner and close family members (Rowlands 1997:125).

3. *The collective dimension* is where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than is possible to reach alone. Collective action may be locally focused such as groups acting at village or neighborhood level, or be more

institutionalized such as the activities of national networks. This dimension is closely related to the personal dimension, since without empowerment at a personal level it is difficult for the individual to be active collectively (Rowlands 1997:15). Likewise, it is difficult for groups to become active and effective without individuals participating who have achieved a degree of personal empowerment. Core values are factors related to a *sense of collective agency*, a *sense of identity*, *dignity as a team*, *self-organization and management* (Rowlands 1997:115ff).

To what extent the core qualities of empowerment for individuals or groups are developed depend on the complex interactions between factors that encourage or inhibit the empowerment process. Factors in favor of empowerment are reinforcing, while inhibiting factors represent obstacles in the empowerment process (Rowlands 197:127).

What would then represent success or progress in terms of empowerment? According to Rowlands, it is possible to define changes that might be expected as a result from empowerment with the help of a detailed understanding of the term and within a particular context (1997:140). Empowerment processes are dynamic, and the three dimensions of empowerment suggested in Rowland's models are closely linked; positive changes in one dimension can encourage changes in either the same dimension or the others (Rowland 1997:127). The process of empowerment is both experienced as a feeling of personal change and development and demonstrated in changed behavior. Each woman experiences the process in an individual way, related to her own history, circumstances and action (Rowlands 1997:114).

Instead of examining the core values, the inhibiting and encouraging factors together with changes due to the interactions within each dimension, this thesis analyzes core values, factors and changes separately and lastly it considers the big picture. This choice is due to the focus on the empowerment of women through education, with a larger emphasis on the individual than in the case of Rowlands, who examined women's empowerment through participation in explicit development projects. In relation to theories of empowerment, Rowlands is most suitable for this study as she in particular emphasizes women's empowerment and the way the different dimensions affect one another in a woman's personal life, in relation to others and within a group. By including circumstances that are in favor or represent obstacles of the empowerment process, Rowlands' theory sheds light on the factors in need of support and those that diminish it. Additionally, the examination of empowerment through education is coherent with Rowlands perception of the concept as she argues people are empowered when they are able to maximize the opportunities available to them. In this context, education represents that opportunity.

4 Background

In order to provide a deeper understanding of the context, this chapter aims to present a background picture about education in Indonesia and what it is like being a woman in Gerupuk, Lombok.

4.1 Education in Indonesia

Education in Indonesia is the responsibility of Departmen Pendidikan Nasional (Ministry of National Education), which defines education as follows:

“Conscious and well-planned effort in creating a learning environment and learning process so that learners will be able to develop their full potential for acquiring spiritual and religious strengths, develop self-control, personality, intelligence, morals and noble character and skills that one needs for him/herself, for the community, for the nation, and for the State.” (Depdiknas 23 February 2009).

The Government of Indonesia has since its independence in 1945 steadily expanded its education system with compulsory nine years of primary education declared as a national policy in 1994 (UNICEF: 1998). Basic education in Indonesia is conducted through the formal system and consists of six years of primary school and three years of junior secondary school (Doloksaribu 2002:2).

Most children enroll in primary school with no significant gender gap, however when it comes to drop out rates, numbers tell a different story. Data shows significant gender gaps in school dropout rates, both at primary and junior secondary levels with girls more likely to drop out of school than boys. In primary school and junior secondary school, six out of ten children who drop out of school are girls. The gender gap slightly widens at the level of senior secondary school, where seven girls drop out for every three boys (UNICEF: 1998). In an effort to improve people’s access to education, the Indonesian government issued Law Number 20 in 2003, which gives females and males the same right to a free nine-year primary education. These various efforts have not taken gender dimension into account, as the current policies have not considered the different levels of education needed between men and women. As a result, the increased access to education is directed towards boys (CEDAW 2007:37f). Overall, Indonesia has achieved positive progress towards the gender enrollment ratio at primary and junior secondary levels, however, it is evident that access to education becomes increasingly limited for girls as children reach higher levels of education. In other

words, gender issues which are less obvious, more complex and intractable are still an issue within the field of education in Indonesia (UNICEF: 1998).

4.2 The life of women in Gerupuk

Lombok is part of the West Nusa Tenggara province, located between Bali and East Nusa Tenggara. The socioeconomic conditions are relatively poor when compared to other provinces in Indonesia, ranking number 32 out of all 33 provinces according to the Human Development Index (HDI). Twenty-five percent of the population is considered poor and earn less than one dollar a day (WFP: 2009). Islam is deeply rooted within the province and especially in Lombok, which is sometimes referred to as “the island of the thousand mosques” (Anggraeni 2009-02-18).

The majority of the people in Lombok live in rural areas, and an example of this setting is Gerupuk village located on the south coast of Lombok. Around 900 people live in the village and are mainly engaged in fishing, seaweed farming, and agriculture. The area is also popular among surfers, resulting in an increasing tourism. In addition to other sources of income, many families have a kiosk in their house and some women do other people’s laundry. The women have a domestic role in the family, usually staying around the house cleaning, washing, cooking and taking care of children. Employment is scarce in the area and it is common for women in Gerupuk and Lombok to go to Saudi Arabia through an agency and work as maids for a year or two. Duties are clearly divided between men and women, especially fishing and seaweed farming. Men go fishing and women sell the catch at the local market. Men also organize the labor for the bamboo rigs while women dry and later knit the seaweed onto strings. The seaweed is sold to Java and later exported, mainly to Japan. The average monthly income for a family engaged in fishing or seaweed farming is around 500 000 rupiah (approximately 375 SEK).

Gerupuk has a village chief and meetings at village level are held when it is necessary to decide on issues concerning public facilities such as the school or mosque or other matters, for example a robbery incident.

Regarding access to education, there is an elementary school in Gerupuk and the closest junior high school is in Sengkol, 20 kilometers away while other students go to school in Praia 35 km from the village. Public transport by minibus is not possible as the bus only leaves when full, resulting in students arriving late for school. Given this, some students use motorbikes as their means of transportation, although it is more common to stay with relatives in town or rent a room in a student house. Each student house has an adult supervisor and boys and girls are always separated. The cost to attend high school (excluding books, room and board) is approximately 850 000 rupiah per annum (approximately 650 SEK). The tuition fee for Mataram University is approximately 3 million rupiah (approximately 2200 SEK) per annum (Karyadi 2008-12-04, XE Universal money converter).

5 Analysis

This chapter examines whether empowerment through education has occurred among women from Gerupuk. The analysis commences with a comparison of women from Groups A and B in regards to their development of core values within each dimension, followed by the examination of the inhibiting and encouraging factors of women's empowerment through education. This analysis also highlights the identified changes as a result of the interactions.

5.1 Women's ability to develop core values

As previously mentioned, each dimension contains core values that contribute to the individual's transformation, represented as the "key" that opens "locks" on the empowerment door.

5.1.1 Within the personal dimension

The core values within the personal dimension are the development of *self-confidence*, *self-esteem* and *a sense of agency*. Given the broad nature of these core values, it is necessary to note that this study attempts to characterize the women based on their activities and behavior.

To the question of how the respondents would rate their self-esteem, all women but two in Group A indicated having a "high" self esteem (Interviewee 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8A), while most women in Group B were more modest in their answers, determining their self-esteem to be "good", "quite high" or how one respondent explained; "enough". Two women within Group B (Interviewee 3, 8B) mentioned their lack of education contributed to their lack of self-esteem and confidence, and the following statement is also related to a lack of agency:

"I am not confident because when I see people who are smart, I feel inferior. I can not do anything." (Interviewee 8B)

In contrast to the women in Group B who expressed a lack of education as a cause for their low self esteem, four women in Group A mentioned that nine years or more of education made them feel "successful" and "proud", notably a higher perception of themselves in terms of self-esteem and confidence (Interviewee 2, 4, 5, 8A).

“I am very happy for my years in school, I know how to read and write and I am feeling successful. I also make my parents happy and proud.” (Interviewee 2A)

Three of the women within Group A mentioned “*confidence*” as one of the most important things for being a woman, one of them adding “*and to look after yourself*” which directly relates to all core values within the dimensions (Interviewee 1, 3, 5A).

The women were questioned about their dreams for the future and how they picture their lives ten years from now. The amount one allows oneself to dream can be seen as an indicator of having self-confidence and self-esteem. How one pictures ones’ life in ten years time is an indicator of a sense of agency, depending on to what extent dreams and visions are coherent. Research was conducted to find out to what extent the women believed in themselves and their capacity, if the dreams were just dreams or if they were attainable visions of the future. In this context, a vast difference was apparent between the two groups. All married women in Group B expressed dreams concerning their husband’s or children’s work and studies, with many of them not even mentioning what they wanted for themselves. In contrast to Group B, all respondents in Group A described dreams where they themselves played a central part. The majority relayed about dreams regarding working opportunities related to their current studies and some in particular to “*become successful*” and “*make a career*” (Interviewee 1, 2, 6A).

“I dream about serving the community in the field of nutrition and health, I want to share my knowledge with the public. Most important to me is to have a good life with a husband and children; I want to be a strong woman within my family.” (Interviewee 7A).

A big difference between the two groups was discovered regarding their outlook on the future, how the women pictured their life ten years from now. While women from Group A could easily picture themselves ten years from now and talked about jobs, careers and family, most women in Group B had difficulties coming up with an answer. The following statements illustrate the difference between the respondents’ answers regarding their prospects in life:

“I don’t know, maybe I am old and ugly. I have no idea.” (Interviewee 5B).

“Ten years from now I am already a successful person, I have a job and I am not yet married” (Interviewee 1A).

As Rowlands claims, personal empowerment involves more than increases in self-confidence and self-esteem. Women must find ways of having some time for themselves, where all their energy and effort is not going into daily survival and maintenance of the family. In this aspect, large variations were found between the two groups namely all women within Group A were single, while five of the women within Group B were married with children (Interviewee 1, 3 4, 6, 7B). Women within Group A only had themselves to take care of and support, while

most of the women in Group B spend their day working for an income and taking care of children. Furthermore, four of the women within Group B had worked as migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, some of them twice in order to support their families back home (Interviewee 1, 2, 4, 5A).

Examining increased levels of self-esteem, self-confidence and a sense of agency as important achievements of education is complex due to the likelihood of the core values being developed through the interaction of many activities and experiences. Furthermore, it was identified that a correlation exists between education and the ability to develop a sense of self and individual confidence.

5.1.2 Within the relational dimension

The relational dimension emphasizes existing established relationships and the core values relate to the individual's ability to *get support, negotiate, communicate, and defend her rights*

The ability to obtain educational support differed between the groups, as parental support represented a significant factor for women achieving education or not. All women from Group A claimed it was their own decision to continue studying and the majority emphasized the support received from family and friends. Several reasons were identified regarding why the women from Group B had dropped out of school. One woman had to leave school in order to look after her baby brother after her father divorced her mother and another woman did not complete her studies because she got married at age fourteen and had a daughter the same year (Interviewee 2, 6B). Given that all women came from similar socio economical backgrounds, it is interesting to note that for women within Group B, the decision for them to continue with their education or not was not only due to economical factors.

The decision for whether women attend school is closely linked to another core value within the dimension, defending your own rights. Reason being that nine years of education is mandatory in Indonesia and every citizen is entitled to this right. As expressed by all women within Group A, it was their decision to continue with their studies together with the support of their parents and by so doing they indirectly defended their right to education.

Another core value within the dimension is the ability to negotiate, which relates to decision-making. When posed a question to describe a decision-making process within the family (decisions regarding them and others), women within Group A expressed to a large extent an ability to make their own decisions.

“I feel like I can make my own decisions, I don't need to ask other people. I am certain and sure by myself” (Interviewee 6A).

The majority of women in Group A are single and described their decision-making process as being between themselves and their parents, while the majority of women in Group B are married and therefore advised that decision making is conducted between themselves and their husbands. Many of the respondents from

Group B described the decision-making process as a discussion and dialogue, whereby they eventually both agree on a solution. It was mainly the single women in Group B still living at home who expressed they are not able to make decisions, describing their mothers and fathers as the ones expressing ideas and making decisions for them.

A large variation in the respondent's answers was discovered regarding the ability to communicate. During the discussion with the respondents about ideas and opinions and if they felt people were listening when they had something to say, the majority of women from Group A strongly agreed (Interviewee 1, 3, 4, 5, 8A).

"I have the ability to say my opinion to other people, they give me attention and listen to me." (Interviewee 5A)

In contrast to the women within Group A, women within Group B were more reserved in their answers. Some explained not being able to express ideas or opinions while others experienced that people did not really listen to them when they had something to say (Interviewee 2, 4, 5, 7B).

"I always make suggestions but people never listen to me." (Interviewee 2B)

A topic that combines the core values of decision making and communication concerns participation in the public life in Gerupuk, that is if the respondent has joined village meetings in the past and if so how active she used to be. None of the women in Group A stated that they joined the village meetings, the main reason being that they went to school or worked outside Gerupuk, while all women except for one within Group B stated they usually attended. About half of them stated that they were active and could give suggestions while the other half expressed they were too young to fully participate, taking on a more passive role when attending the meetings. One woman explained she would join but only to watch and never to interrupt, because she was still young and not capable of expressing ideas (Interviewee 4B). Another woman stated she always went to the village meetings but just to watch as only old men could give suggestions (Interviewee 4B). A third woman referred to herself as still being a child and therefore not capable of giving ideas or opinions (Interviewee 5B).

Another topic related to all the core values within the dimension concerned how the women would act if they encountered a problem regarding their source of income or studies. If the problem required them to talk to a government official, headmaster or manager at work, what would they do? Within this topic, vast differences were apparent between the two groups. All women in Group A immediately knew what action they would take and whom to contact in such a matter. They collectively expressed a will and determination to solve a problem, and described having a feeling of being able to talk to the person in charge. One of the respondents who is working as a nurse at a health center has already faced a similar situation and explained the following:

“If I have a problem in the puskesmas (health center) I like to discuss it with my boss so we can find a solution to the problem.” (Interviewee 2A)

In contrast to Group A, many women in Group B could not come up with a straight answer of what do in such a matter and showed less signs of agency. If the problem had required them to go and meet with the village chief, none of the women advised they would go by themselves, and would only go if accompanied by a family member. One respondent explained she would keep the problem to herself, therefore not making a big issue out of it (Interviewee 7B).

For Group A, all the core values within the relational dimension were strongly present. Evidence of the individual’s ability to get support for education was identified, both from family and friends. Furthermore, the ability to communicate was clearly developed as Group A stated they were able to express ideas and opinions and have others listen to what they had to say. This could in turn be related to the ability to negotiate, a core value that women within Group A to a large degree had developed, as they claimed to be capable of making their own decisions.

5.1.3 Within the collective dimension

The collective dimension is closely related to the personal dimension, as without empowerment at a personal level it is difficult for the individual to be active within a group. The core values are factors related to a *sense of collective agency*, a *sense of identity* and *dignity as a team*, and *self-organization and management*

Relating the core values to the empowerment process through education appears to be somewhat different to Rowlands’ study, which examined empowerment through women development projects consisting of groups of women. In this context, collective empowerment through education focuses more on the individual’s perception of other women in the same position.

The majority of women in Group A indicated having a positive relationship with other female students and explained that they had exchanged thoughts and mutually given each other support and motivation throughout school (Interviewee 1,3,4,6,7,8A). As previously mentioned, in regards to the development of core values within the relational dimension, many of the women were also influenced by friends in the decision to continue their studies. In addition to gaining knowledge, the school environment provided opportunities for these women to develop friendships, in turn contributing to a sense of identity. One statement that indicated a sense of collective agency and also the importance of support in a larger context is the following:

“Me and the other girls motivated and gave each other support in class. It is important, because by doing so Indonesian women can be successful, Indonesia can develop and go forward.” (Interviewee 4A).

The process of collective empowerment builds on the individual's experience of participation in groups or collective activities. Half of the women in both groups stated that they were members of a club or organization. The women in Group A mentioned being part of student associations at campus, extra curricular and the local Red Cross organization and one woman was considering joining a political club (Interviewee 1, 3, 4, 7, 8A). Of the women in Group B, five were members of "arisan", which can be described as a lottery group made out of neighboring women who each week contribute with a small amount of money (Interviewee 1, 3, 5, 6, 8B). Of the women in Group B who were engaged in the seaweed business, all of them mentioned being part of what they referred to as "seaweed groups" (Interviewee 1, 3, 8B). They explained that the groups consisted of two canoes, the owners and their wives, altogether around 10-15 people. One man is in charge of finding a buyer and after sealing the deal, the rest of the group organize the work with money earned shared among the members depending on each person's contribution to the workload. The women did not view their groups as cooperations, rather a way of organizing the work around the farming and selling of seaweed.

The majority of women in Group A showed signs of developed core values within the collective dimension, primarily a sense of identity as many described a supportive relationship existing with other female students. Education and school has exposed them to areas where they can join clubs and organizations, which in turn leads to collective empowerment that builds on the individuals' experience of participation.

5.2 Factors regarding women's empowerment through education

To what extent the core qualities of empowerment for individuals or groups are developed depend on the complex interactions between the factors that encourage or inhibit the empowerment process. Balancing these factors represents the second aspect to take into account when examining women's empowerment.

5.2.1 Inhibiting

Women within Group A have directly or indirectly faced attitudes from society regarding them being women, and also women who are attaining higher levels of education with the combination of these two attitudes representing challenges. One of these challenges can be described as "budayah patriarki" or a culture of patriarchy, which is widespread in Indonesia and consists of a mindset where men are seen as more important than women (Nirawaty 2009-01-21). The following

statement illustrates the culture of patriarchy and how men's perceptions can be seen as an inhibiting factor to women's empowerment through education:

“Men don't want to feel inferior to women, or less smart than them. The perception in the community is that it's improper for women to know more than men. A woman who knows more will get more mobile and some people think it is very inappropriate for women to go “here and there” (Utami 2009-02-10).

This type of culture can be perceived as an obstacle to women's empowerment through education as a common opinion indicates that a man does not want to compete with his wife and ought to be the leader at home (Konio 2009-03-10). The patriarchy protects itself through religion and as Islam is deeply rooted in West Nusa Tenggara and particularly in Lombok, the “budayah patriarki” is most likely to be experienced among women from Gerupuk.

“Islam affects people, in the way they perceive themselves, their environment and identity and in turn this might create psychological blocks” (Anggraeni 2009-02-18).

According to Ninin Nirawaty at the State Ministry of Women's Empowerment, religion is an inhibiting factor when the interpretations made by religious leaders are not in favor of women. While there is an extensive mistrust towards government officials in the society, people instill immense trust and belief in religious leaders, also known as “Tuan Guru” (Older Teacher) (Nirawaty 2009-01-21). Religious leaders in Lombok are particularly influential within the community, as many people follow their guidance regarding how to handle issues in their social life.

“Religion is based upon the interpretations of the Tuan Guru, if he says that women must do this and that, people follow” (Rochma 2009-01-22).

Organizations working in favor of women's empowerment and advocating their rights, usually meet resistance in Lombok as the Tuan Gurus usually reject their agendas as “western values” and not as universal (Hardani 2009-01-22).

Religious philosophy together with views and opinions has an important impact on the attitudes regarding women and education. Cultural and social attitudes become challenges for women who continue to higher levels of education, as they feel affected by the norms of the community. One example of an attitude representing an obstacle is the perception of women's education being a waste of time and money. Boys are more likely to be sent to school as a prevalent attitude consists as follows: *“If you send your girl to school, what will be the return investment?”* (Utoyo 2009-01-21). Furthermore, in general boys are encouraged to continue their studies while girls typically marry at an early age and are therefore, according to the mindset of society, *“better off staying at home”* (Nirawaty 2009-01-21). As earlier mentioned, the enrollment rate of boys and girls are equal while numbers are different at higher levels of education. Perhaps an explanation for

this widespread opinion is that a certain level of education is considered “*enough*” for women, that is the ability to read and write (Konio: 2009-03-10). Regarding attitudes, there is also a slogan in the society saying “*All women will become housewives*”, meaning there is no point to educate women when they sooner or later will end up spending all their time in the house (Suryani 2009-01-05). A similar example is the attitude of: “*Even if you study you will be back in the kitchen*” (Ratningdiah 2009-01-05). The following statement includes the gender role to which women are supposed to conform, together with obstacles identified within the process.

“In general, women are experiencing stereotype conditions; they have domestic roles and are still struggling for recognition and access in areas within the community. Women also have to fight much more than men in order to get support.” (Anggraeni 2009-02-18).

If a girl does not attend school, there is a high possibility she will stay at home to do domestic work and take care of younger siblings. Many such cases are to be found in Lombok and the following statement illustrates the situation:

“When we enroll children in school, they have a chance to be treated as children, a person their age. We don’t just give them knowledge, but also the opportunity to have the life of a child when they otherwise would have to work.” (Anggraeni 2009-02-18).

The economical factor combined with the previous mentioned components also plays its part when it comes to inhibiting aspects and many girls are concerned for the expenses required for her to be able to attain an education.

“A common thought among girls is; -If I go to school, how can my parents afford to pay for my education? And if she doesn’t go, she might worry about her future, if she will be able to find a job and what will happen to her.” (Suryani: 2009-01-05).

Even if primary education in Indonesia is free, parents still must contribute with money for costs of transportation, books, uniforms etc. The economical factor is identified as a reason why girls are taken out of school, however as all women within the study are from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, why is it that only half of the families could afford their daughters education? One example of attitude and mindset which might explain this is the following:

“In some areas it costs 5000 rupiah per day to send your child to school and parents may say that they don’t have money enough. But at the same time the father might spend the equal amount of money on cigarettes each day, so in some cases it is a matter of priority, of what is most important” (Utoyo 2009-01-21).

Regarding inhibiting factors within the empowerment process through education, the obstacles that relate to the experience of the women from Gerupuk are identified as components of the cultural, religious, and social conditions in which they live. In turn, these components contribute to the effects of the gender roles to which these women are supposed to conform.

5.2.2 Encouraging

One of the most positive and encouraging elements identified in favor of the empowerment process was the support received from the women's parents in Group A. Material support was also recognized, as parents paid for their daughter's education and in most cases contributed a monthly allowance as the women did not have their own income as yet. In other words, the parents made their daughter's education a priority. Also support among friends and classmates was identified in addition to networking and maintaining contact with female classmates.

Another encouraging element identified within the empowerment process was motivation. For many of the women in Group A, education was seen as a means of improving their lives:

“My goal is to change my life for the better, make it better. Now I am poor but by going to school and get a job my social and economical life can be changed.” (Interviewee 8A).

All women in Group A were optimistic about their prospects of finding a job as a result of their studies; this is also a motivational component. Motivation also results from the accumulation of knowledge and women within Group A identified a number of ways in which education has been helpful to them. One woman claimed that school had been helpful to her because there she and others could gain knowledge. The following statement by her shows signs of self-belief and also motivation:

“I like school because there we can get knowledge, experience and become smart. I can be a successful woman by going to school; it is easier to become successful if you study.” (Interviewee 4A)

Another encouraging element in the process was the learning of specific skills, both theoretical and practical. One of the women studying midwifery explained that education in the field of health had contributed to her knowledge about medications and she now knows how to help sick people (Interviewee 2A). Another woman studying nutrition stated she had gained a lot of knowledge and the opportunity to practice her skills, and is now able to observe and identify villages with conditions of poor nutrition (Interviewee 7A). For some women, the skills might lead directly to employment and therefore to a widening of economic

choices. For others, learning skills and using them has possibly given them a sense of self-worth that they might have been missing before.

In sum, the factors working in favor of the process are identified as support from family and friends, motivation and the learning of new skills. As the second aspect in examining empowerment includes the balancing of both encouraging and inhibiting factors, components of the religious, cultural and social conditions must be taken into account. Through support from their families for education, the women in Group A have overcome many of the identified inhibiting factors. The parents have made their daughters education a priority and shown both psychological and economical support which has erased many of the issues concerning the women's opportunities to attain education. Furthermore, through education the women have gained motivation and skills, which have strengthened them as individuals. To a large degree, this strength has helped them to overcome attitudes and norms of society towards them being women attaining higher education.

5.3 Changes due to the interactions

The third aspect to consider when examining the empowerment process is changes due to the interaction of the core values together with the inhibiting and encouraging factors.

To attain nine years or more of formal education, the women in Group A had to move outside Gerupuk, to either Sengkol, Praia or Mataram and live in a student house, representing a change containing many aspects. By moving away from home at age thirteen, the women have gained an experience of taking care of themselves and developed an ability to become more self-independent. In other words, this can be described as a sign of personal change. As a result of living in a town and taking part in student life on campus, women in Group A have also been exposed to an increased amount of opportunities to take part in activities, meetings and clubs. Overall, the ability to interact outside home has increased and this change is due to the interactions between core values and encouraging factors.

Another change to be recognized is that women within Group A have developed an ability to act in their own interests. One example of this is how they have chosen education over family by postponing their plans of getting married and having children. The majority of women in Group A mentioned they would probably be married and have children within ten years, but firstly they will complete their education. This decision represents a life choice, as the women have showed signs of taking charge of themselves and increasing their capacity to make their own choices. Furthermore, this is an example of change manifested and demonstrated in changed behavior, as the women have not conformed to what is usually accepted as the norm in society regarding women their age.

Furthermore, the individual's ability to negotiate, communicate, and defend her rights does not only represent core values within the relational dimension, but also demonstrates changes to personal empowerment. These changes were evident as

the women within Group A described they to a large extent were able to formulate and express ideas and have people listen to what they had to say.

Another example of a change due to the interactions is the women's positive outlook regarding their future. This outlook and vision can be linked to education as the majority of the women told of dreams about a career associated with their current studies. All women were determined to obtain a job in the future and many of them mentioned education as a reason for them being able to have visions and dreams. It can also be asserted that due to their education, women within Group A were able to sense that more possibilities are now available to them, as opposed to the women in Group B. Education has equipped the women in Group A with a wider range of options. By going to school and attaining an education, these women have been exposed to more life opportunities and with more choices comes more ways of making a living.

The main changes recognized due to the interactions of the encouraging and inhibiting factors together with the women's ability to develop core values are an increase in self-independence, an ability to act in one's own interests, and the ability to express ideas and opinions. Furthermore, an optimism and positive outlook on the future has been identified, in addition to increased opportunities for life choices. In sum, many features of education have strengthened the identity of the individual, helping to focus on her own needs.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to examine the empowerment of women through education among the women from the village Gerupuk in Lombok, Indonesia. From the field study results, the women in group A have become empowered through education. Firstly, this thesis has recognized that the development of core values within each dimension has been successful, especially within the personal and relational dimensions as abilities of individual confidence and communication with others were strongly present. The successful development of core values was due to the dominance of the encouraging factors. For example, the parental support for their daughter's education and the learning of new skills outweighed the inhibiting obstacles of religious, cultural and social components. In turn, the interactions of the development of core values and encouraging factors have allowed for changes to take place in the women's lives, such as a widening of life opportunities and a positive future outlook. Many features of education have strengthened the identity of the individual, helping to focus on her own needs.

In this discussion of empowerment and in examining the empowerment of women through education in Gerupuk, it has become clear that the empowerment of women is a gender issue and not just not simply a women's issue. It is about transforming attitudes and perceptions within the community, as seen in the section of inhibiting factors.

This case study of women's empowerment through education in Indonesia highlights many opportunities for further research. One topic would be to research further into the causes of the inhibiting factors of women's empowerment through education, in order to uncover what is required to diminish them. Although more importantly it would be interesting to follow up with the women within this study years from now, in order to analyze how the empowerment process has evolved within new environments such as future workplaces and their own families.

It is clear that education has given women from Gerupuk the opportunity to go "here and there" on the empowering vehicle of education and hopefully this vehicle will allow all women in Indonesia on its ride, as empowerment will not only strengthen them as individuals, but also the society as a whole.

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List of Interviewees

Women with nine years or more of education (Group A)

- 1A. 2009-01-25 Gerupuk
- 2A. 2009-02-10 Mataram
- 3A. 2009-01-22 Sengkol
- 4A. 2009-02-07 Sengkol
- 5A. 2009-02-07 Praia
- 6A. 2009-02-07 Mataram
- 7A. 2009-02-10 Mataram
- 8A. 2009-02-15 Gerupuk

Women with less than nine years of education (Group B)

- 1B. 2009-02-15 Gerupuk
- 2B. 2009-02-15 Gerupuk
- 3B. 2009-02-15 Gerupuk
- 4B. 2009-02-19 Gerupuk
- 5B. 2009-02-19 Gerupuk
- 6B. 2009-02-19 Gerupuk
- 7B. 2009-02-22 Gerupuk
- 8B. 2009-02-22 Gerupuk

Anggraeni, Dian, Provincial Coordinator, ACCESS, Mataram 2009-02-18

Hardani, Sydafirah, National Program Coordinator CEDAW South East Asia Programme (CEDAW SEAP) Jakarta 2001-01-22

Karyadi, Organisasi Pemuda (Chairman of Youth Organization) Gerupuk 2008-12-04

Konio, Siti, Programme Officer, World Food Programme, Mataram 2009-03-10

Misilanthi, Fajri, Programme Coordinator, YKSSI, Mataram 2009-02-11

Nirawaty, Dr. Ninin, Deputy Assistant for Education of Women and Deputy for Women's Quality of Life, State Ministry of Women's Empowerment Republic of Indonesia, Jakarta 2009-01-21

Rochma, Chamim, Finance and administration officer, UNIFEM, Jakarta 2009-01-22

Suryani, Ani, Lecturer Human Rights Center, Mataram University, Mataram 2009-01-05

Utami, Lestari Sri, Executive Director YKKSI (Indonesian Family Health and Welfare Foundation), Mataram 2009-02-10

Utoyo Yona, Spika, Education Officer UNICEF, Jakarta 2009-01-21