BETWEEN POWER AND EMPOWERMENT

Monitoring and Evaluation at a Grassroots Women's Fund in South Africa

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Abstract

In the past few years women's empowerment and gender equality initiatives have been under increasing pressure to measure their impact. This thesis explores the stakeholders' experiences with the monitoring and evaluation practice with a case study of a women's fund that provides grants to grassroots women's organizations in South Africa. The study is based on previous research, the grassroots development framework, and a combination of principal-agent theory and Kabeer's (1999) women empowerment framework. Through a content analysis of interviews with staff members and grantees, as well as the review of documents, challenges and opportunities experienced in their current monitoring and evaluation practice are identified. It is argued that the principal-agent constellation is a key factor that creates challenges in conducting monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, it is claimed that there is currently a gap between widely used tools and practice at grassroots level as well as between the stakeholders' different understandings of success and how to monitor and evaluate the work of women's organizations in the context of a grassroots women's fund. This leads to the postulation for an alternative monitoring and evaluation model, which strengthens the systematic use of informal methods, is oriented on the agents, and captures the link between individual experience and structure.

Keywords: monitoring and evaluation, women's fund, grantees, grassroots development, principal-agent problem

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List of Abbreviations

AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
CBO	Community-based organization
CSI	Corporate Social Investment
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CV	Curriculum Vitae
GBV	Gender-based violence
INWF	International Network of Women's Funds
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual and Intersexed
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPO	Non-profit organization
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WHEAT	Women's Hope Education and Training

1. Introduction

Grassroots development is a buzzword of alternative development approaches. It emerged during the 1970s after criticism of the so-called aid industry and top-down channeling of development initiatives became louder, as those frequently failed to meet the particular needs and wants of local communities as well as their local conditions and contexts (Parnwell 2008: 113). Grassroots or bottom-up development is thus centered on and emerges from the communities (ibid). Nowadays, development actors are still struggling to truly implement and foster development initiatives that are based on grassroots level and that are led by the target groups themselves. In many cases even non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who are among the development actors that should be close to the people, have become more bureaucratic and professionalized over the years, tending to move away from the grassroots (Jönsson, Jerneck & Arvidson 2012: 130).

Small grassroots initiatives and community-based organizations (CBOs) often struggle to access formal funding because initially they are not well-established. With an emphasis on women-led CBOs, the Women's Hope Education and Training (WHEAT) Trust in South Africa was founded in 1998 as a feminist women's fund in order to close this funding gap particularly for grassroots women's organizations. Until today they serve this niche market by providing grants to 62[1] different CBOs on average per year.

Dibie and Dibie (2012: 95) argue that no development process will be totally beneficial to a nation if it does not involve women. The United Nations (UN) declared the years 1976-1985 as the *UN Decade for Women* acknowledging that the gender perspective is important for development practice (Jönsson et al. 2012: 69). Since then, for the past three decades, feminist theories and perspectives have influenced the debates on development across disciplines regarding women's role in development and improving women's status (Drolet 2010: 212). One example

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[1] This number only shows single granting; many organizations receive more than one grant per year.

is Amartya Sen (1999: 203) who argues that women's agency is one of the more neglected areas of development studies. He states: "Nothing, arguably, is as important today in the political economy of development as an adequate recognition of political, economic and social participation and leadership of women (ibid)". Gill et al. (2009: 23) claim that most notably in recent years, women moved from being passive beneficiaries of development initiatives to active agents in bringing about change. The WHEAT Trust follows this approach by supporting women at the grassroots level.

Women's empowerment and gender equality initiatives have been under increasing pressure to measure their impact over the past two decades (Batliwala & Pittman 2010: 7). In the context of this thesis it is to be asked how a grant-maker like the WHEAT Trust measures impact and if 'measuring' is even useful. What does success mean to the funder, to the grantees or to the fund's own donors? These questions, among others, are crucial in defining and conceptualizing a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approach. In the past few years it has been increasingly recognized that women's organizations and particularly women's funds face specific challenges with current M&E practices (see Batliwala & Pittman 2010; Batliwala 2011a, 2011b; Cabria 2013; Keith-Brown, Cabria and Shah 2013). The reasons are multifaceted but root in the fact that their work is embedded in complex realities (Batliwala & Pittman 2010). M&E in grant-making is generally a challenge, since it depends on the various stakeholders' ideas about change and how to measure the impact of grants. Cabria (2013: 2) from the *International Network of Women's Funds* (INWF) claims that women's funds around the world are struggling to find the methodologies and tools that will help them evaluate how their support of women's groups is contributing to building feminist and women's movements and ultimately improving the lives of women and girls. These arguments imply that the current tools and methods are not necessarily appropriate, yet widely used and demanded, which creates a particular challenge, especially for the WHEAT Trust and its niche target group.

This thesis shall contribute to a broader discussion on M&E practice at a women's fund, grassroots initiatives, impact assessment, and donor-recipient/principal-agent relation. The research focuses on the particular case of the WHEAT Trust and its grantees because they are unique in their grant-making strategy and target group.

Drawing on the problem statement above, the research question in this study is:

What are the challenges and opportunities in M&E with grassroots women's organizations from the viewpoint of the stakeholders in the context of a women's fund?

The following sub-questions shall support in answering the main research question:

1. *How is the relationship between funder and grantee perceived?*
2. *What are the understandings of success for the different stakeholders involved?*
3. *How does the WHEAT Trust currently monitor and evaluate the work of their grantees?*
4. *How do the stakeholders experience it?*

It has to be pointed out that the purpose of this thesis is not to evaluate the WHEAT Trust or their M&E practice. The aim of this study is to analyze the approach from the viewpoint of staff members and grantees as the main stakeholders.

Even though this study focusses on a specific case, the WHEAT Trust in South Africa, the topic is relevant in the general context of development studies. It touches upon fundamental issues of power relations, effectiveness of development initiatives, grassroots development and women empowerment. Therefore, it is part of a broader development discussion.

The topic is also closely linked to social work theory and practice, where one of the main principles is that the clients are the experts of their own lives (Hepworth et al. 2010: 306). The WHEAT Trust as a facilitator emphasizes that women on grassroots level have to find their own workable solutions. The

International Federation of Social Workers defines the purpose of social work as the promotion of social change and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being, with the principles of human rights and social justice being fundamental to it (Hare 2004: 409). In a broad sense, this is also what the WHEAT Trust aims for, with the additional emphasis on feminist principles.

This research is a qualitative case study guided by previous research on M&E in women's organizations and women's funds as well as the theoretical framework of grassroots development, principal-agent theory and Kabeer's (1999) women empowerment framework.

The case is introduced through the cornerstones of the WHEAT Trust, the role of women's funds in the development field, corporate social investment (CSI) and M&E as they are all crucial to grasp the topic.

Previous research that was done on the topic in this specific area of women's organizations and women's funds by Batliwala and Pittman (2010) and Keith-Brown et al. (2013), which also influences this study, is presented through a summary of their results.

The chapter on the theoretical framework consists of an outline of the grassroots development approach and a combination of the principal-agent theory and Kabeer's (1999) women empowerment framework, which embed this study theoretically.

The case study as a research strategy is presented, including the selection of this case, semi-structured interviews and review of documents as methods of data collection, limitations, ethical considerations and the method of analysis.

In the analysis, the results are presented covering a variety of topics such as funder-grantee relationship, the understandings of success, WHEAT's current M&E approach from the perspective of the main stakeholders, challenges and advantages that were named and finally the respondents' wishes for change in M&E.

The final chapter in this thesis is the concluding discussion, where I argue that the principal-agent constellation is a key factor that creates challenges in conducting M&E. Furthermore, I claim that there is currently a gap between

widely used tools and practice at grassroots level as well as between the different understandings of how success and how to monitor and evaluate the work of grassroots women's organizations in the context of a women's fund. This leads to the argument for an alternative M&E model, which strengthens the systematic use of informal methods, is oriented on the agents, and captures the link between individual experience and structure.

2. Background

For the conclusiveness of a case study it is important to describe the background information that is relevant to the particular case. In the following, the cornerstones of the WHEAT Trust are outlined, including their vision and mission. The role of women's funds in the development field is explained as well as corporate social investment, since it is one of the WHEAT Trust's sources of funding. Lastly, general ideas about M&E are presented.

2.1 The WHEAT Trust

The WHEAT Trust was founded in August 1998, as *Women's Hope Education and Training Trust*. The founders, a group of South African feminists, believed that funds for grassroots women's leadership were needed after the apartheid era, in order to address core issues of poverty and especially gender-based violence (GBV) (WHEAT 2014a). At present the WHEAT Trust has eight permanent staff members: executive director, grants coordinator, grants administration officer, grants liaison officer, finance officer, fundraiser, communications officer as well as media and marketing officer. The vision and mission shall be presented as they formulate the core of the WHEAT Trust's work.

WHEAT's Vision
A Southern Africa where all women live in safety, enjoy their human rights and have equal access to education, training and a sustainable adequate income.

WHEAT's Mission
Through supporting grassroots women to seek local solutions to local problems, WHEAT invests in education, training and capacity building to foster women's leadership and to enable dialogue. To achieve this, WHEAT promotes a culture of giving and follows the principles of human rights for women and of feminism.

What is unique about the WHEAT Trust is that it is the only grant-maker in South Africa that focuses on grassroots women's organizations. It means that these groups are founded and run directly by the women that are also the target group, which means for example women from marginalized communities, members of the LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual and Intersexed) community, refugee women, women affected by HIV, amongst others. WHEAT's grantees are based in all provinces of South Africa. Grants can be accessed by marginalized women from or working in rural, peri-urban areas and townships[2]. WHEAT's priority funding areas (as informed by grassroots women-led organisations) are the following[3]:

- HIV and AIDS
- Sexual and reproductive health/rights for women
- Sustainable income for women
- Gender-based violence
- Refugee women and migrant rights
- Lesbian women's groups
- Environmental sustainability

Any eligible group of women that is not well established yet, for example those that are not yet registered as a non-profit organization (NPO), but works on either practical or strategic gender needs (see Moser 1989), is women-led and cannot access formal funding, can qualify for a grant. WHEAT has four different types of grants: *Basic Grant* (1,000-5,000 Rand[4]), *Seed Funding Grant* (5,000-20,000 Rand) and *Women in Leadership Grant* (5,000-20,000 Rand) and a *Discretionary Grant*.

The core of WHEAT's work is grant-making as well as capacity building of the grantees. Capacity building takes place through technical assistance, training workshops and networking, which are offered during conventions that regularly take place in the different provinces of South Africa. Apart from grant-making

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[2] Townships are informal settlements in South African peri-urban areas
[3] Grant criteria as of May 2014
[4] 1 Euro = 14.15 Rand, hence 1,000 Rand = 70.58 Euro (as of 25 July 2014)

and capacity building, WHEAT's work also includes promoting women's rights, women's empowerment, and speaking out about problems that affect the daily lives of women in South Africa.

2.2 The Role of Women's Funds in the Development Field

The development field includes many actors, such as governments, multi- and binational actors, NGOs, etc. (Jönsson et al. 2012: Ch. 4). Funds and trusts in general are facilitators in the sense of giving grants to projects and NGOs and providing the financial resources necessary for them to carry out their work. By legal definition, a trust is arrangement through which one set of people, the trustees, are the legal owners of property (from a third party's) which is administered in the interests of another set, the beneficiaries (Black et al. 2009a). What is important for the context of this case is that there are three parties involved: the trustor (donors), the trustee (WHEAT Trust) and the beneficiaries (grantees)[5].

According to the INWF (2014 a), women's funds have existed since the early 1980s with their origin in Europe and the USA. During the 1990s they were also established on the other continents. Arutyunova and Clark (2013: 20) highlight the important role that women's funds have historically played in resourcing a broad diversity of women's organizations. Nowadays women's funds can be found in many countries while their work focus differs depending on the national and cultural context. Their common goal is to bridge gender gaps and redistribute resources for women's and girls' empowerment (INWF 2014b). Therefore, what distinguishes women's funds from other funds is that they focus on women as their target group. Some women's funds base their values on feminist principles, but a women's fund is not necessarily based on feminist principles.

The case in this study is a South African women's trust, focusing on grassroots women as their grantees. In that sense the WHEAT Trust is a

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[5] The difference between a fund and a trust is mainly a legal one and is not relevant for the topic of this thesis.

development actor that aims to contribute to development and social change in South Africa through supporting the work of grassroots women.

2.3 Corporate Social Investment

The WHEAT Trust acquires a considerable part of its money from sources within South Africa, especially corporate social investment (CSI) donors. As such, CSI has an important impact on WHEAT's grant-making and in their M&E, and hence, it shall be described in more details below.

Overall, the WHEAT Trust acquires funds from different sources: larger international women's funds, CSI from various South African companies, corporations and banks, as well as donations from individuals throughout the year (WHEAT 2013). They host a large-scale annual fundraising event, which is the only large amount of money that belongs to WHEAT's own assets.

CSI in South Africa has emerged as a facet of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Ndhlovu 2011: 73). It is worth noting that CSI is a South African phenomenon, which, during the apartheid era, was regarded by the business community as necessary for survival in an uncompromising international atmosphere of sanctions and trade restrictions and growing domestic political unrest. Until today South African companies are obliged to give donations to public benefit (ibid). It is important to mention this, since donors, such as CSI donors, came to play an important role in grant-making and hence also in M&E within the WHEAT Trusts. CSI donors have different conditions and can decide on which purpose their donation has to be spent.

Arutyunova and Clark (2013: 36) refer to the private sector as a "major new player" in development financing and philanthropy. By private sector they mean diverse organizations or companies that operate on a for-profit basis. They argue that they have a growing role and influence in global development processes. Furthermore, they claim that there has been little scrutiny thus far of how the private sector, driven mainly by the profit motive, is influencing development priorities and practice and "delivering sustainable development results

themselves" (ibid: 37). In their view there is a much broader shift underway in the way development itself is being financed, what might be called a change in emphasis from 'aid' to 'investment'. This shift is reflective of the growing influence of private sector paradigms and their very diverse approaches and priorities, as well as rapidly changing notions of what development is or should be (ibid: 42). They found that a narrow and linear 'cause-effect' logic and focus on returns on investment is clearly visible in many 'investing in women and girls' initiatives that display a limited or instrumental understanding of what leads to women's economic empowerment and political participation (ibid: 44). This is important to keep in mind throughout the following discussion about the influences that shape WHEAT's M&E.

2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

To understand the general idea of M&E, the cornerstones are outlined before going into the literature review and theoretical framework.

M&E can be perceived and defined differently depending on the context. It has to be made clear that in this thesis M&E is understood within the field of development and women's funds. UN Women, for example, developed an M&E framework for their *Fund for Gender Equality*. In this framework M&E is seen as a way to strengthen impact and effectiveness of the fund's programs as well as a means to inform national and local plans and policies, create improved indicators to track progress and provide strategic directions to policy makers and programme implementers for scaling up (De Mendoza 2011: 4). The large scope of the UN as a multilateral development actor becomes clear from this understanding.

Batliwala and Pittman (2010) from the *Association for Women's Rights and Development* (AWID)[6] present a definition that seems more relatable for small organizations such as the WHEAT Trust and its grantees:

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[6] The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is an international feminist, membership organization committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's human rights. See www.awid.org

In the context of social change work, monitoring is an ongoing program management activity, assessing the implementation of activities and progress made toward meeting outcomes (organizational, programmatic, or policy-related) for the purposes of measuring effectiveness and efficiency. Monitoring is done on a frequent and regular basis to determine whether work is proceeding according to plan, and if sudden or unexpected shifts or reversals have occurred that must be attended to in order to proceed towards intended goals and objectives (Batliwala & Pittman 2010: 5).

They further define:

Evaluation aims to assess the overall impact of a social change intervention against an explicit set of goals and objectives. Evaluation involves the systematic collection and analysis of data to help us discover if, how, and why a particular intervention or set of interventions worked or did not. They are conducted less frequently than monitoring, as they are more comprehensive and aim to capture the big picture of impact at particular moments in time (ibid).

From these definitions it becomes clear that monitoring is more frequent and mostly conducted throughout the process in order to *assess* if *the intervention* is going according to plan. Evaluation is conducted less frequently and mainly to *assess the impact* of an intervention and to determine whether it was successful or not. In general M&E processes can include quantitative as well as qualitative methods (ibid: 6). Some of the most common frameworks that are mentioned and used within the field of development and gender are the following: Logical Framework Analysis; Results Based Management Approaches; Theory of Change Approach; Outcome Mapping; Participatory Approaches; Harvard Analytical Framework; Moser Gender Planning Framework; Gender Analysis Matrix; Women's Empowerment Framework; Social Relations Framework; InterAction's Gender Audit; Measuring Advocacy Strategies and Assessing Networks (ibid). During my research I found that WHEAT does not use any of these frameworks to assess the grantees' work and the topic of frameworks is revisited later on.

Especially in the environment of a trust, where money is a main part of the work, accountability is required and acquired through M&E. Bornstein (2006: 2) explains that for many donors the solution to the dilemma of accountability and impact has been the adoption of specific approaches to planning, monitoring and evaluation that tightly link inputs and projects to the outcomes desired, e.g. the Logical Framework Analysis.

Nevertheless, during the past years doubts were raised about M&E in the context of NGOs but also more specifically of women's organizations and women's funds. Bornstein (2006: 2) refers to research in South Africa, which suggests that M&E systems often foster fear and deceit, resulting is systemic distortions of information and limited improvement of projects and implementation. Bell and Aggleton (2012: 795) even claim that programs whose effects are most precisely and easily measured are often the least transformational, and a focus on outcome measurement de-prioritizes the most transformational but least predictable programs. This argument has its validity when it comes to the focus on numbers and 'hard facts' in M&E methods. Vance (2009: 20) argues that certain standard data are required for accountability, but numeric values alone do not account for many of the grantees' most important achievements. She points to the danger that if short-term, material progress is what is valued, grantees will consciously or unconsciously adjust programs accordingly (ibid: 21).

Hence, Bell and Aggleton (ibid) argue that new ways have to be found, which make it possible to assess impact that is more grounded in the realities of practice than the currently used and promoted results-based methods. This argument leads to the further question of whether processes, outcomes and impacts of social change *can* even be assessed. Batliwala and Pittman (2010: 3) criticize that it is taken for granted that the current M&E instruments are adequate for measuring such change and more so to accelerate it. They argue that in the context of women's rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment work, M&E approaches can create particular kinds of challenges (ibid:4). Such shall be outlined in the following chapter, based on current research as outlined in the following chapter.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Challenges in M&E for Women's Organizations and Women's Funds

There are many studies that deal with the topic of monitoring and evaluation. For this research, two studies were selected as most relevant to the specific case that is studied.

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) as well as the International Network of Women's Funds (INWF) recently conducted research about the challenges in M&E for women's organizations and women's funds respectively. They are both relevant for the situation of the WHEAT Trust since they are facing a particular challenge inheriting both roles – they are a funder as well as a recipient in the sense of a women's organization and the grantees are women's organizations as well.

Batliwala and Pittman (2010) from the AWID published a critical feminist overview of current M&E frameworks and approaches called "Capturing Change in Women's Realities". They state some main issues that they found to be challenging for women's organizations regarding current M&E approaches[7]:

Goals vs. Change
Batliwala and Pittman found that very few M&E frameworks or approaches actually enable an understanding of how change happens or how gender relations have been altered. Through the linearity of many tools they tend to primarily focus on measuring performance against predetermined goals and activities. That way, it can mostly be assessed if the goals have been met, not how and in which way real change has been achieved (ibid: 9). They argue that it has to be questioned whether the frameworks confuse or conflate short-term change with

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[7] I created these categories to summarize the content based on topics that were relevant for this thesis

sustainable change (ibid: 10). M&E is often treated as an add-on, instead of an integrated strong assessment tool (ibid: 15). Interventions are usually based on a particular theory of change, which might not be measurable by hard facts. Therefore, it is challenging for women's organizations to know what to measure and which indicators to look at (ibid: 9). This claim also brings to light the problem that evaluations can lead to a phenomenon called goal displacement. It means that an organization substitutes their goals for other goals (Scott & Marshall 2009), which in this case would be goals they need to reach in order to achieve a 'positive' evaluation.

Donors

M&E frameworks and tools are often not freely chosen but required to meet donor's requirements or other needs (ibid: 4). There is a widespread feeling among recipients that measurement is used as a tool of enforcement and accountability from the donor rather than as a means of understanding and learning (ibid: 9). There is no negotiation space with some donors for discussing what happens with their assessment systems in the sense of little space for modification even if the users discover that it is not working well or that new dimensions need to be added. Batliwala and Pittman criticize investors in women empowerment for demanding 'proof' of positive change and generally wanting evidence of a smooth progression, rather than a picture of the messy reality. Furthermore, as power is a recurrent topic in M&E, organizations are often afraid that M&E is used punitively when it comes to future funding (ibid: 15).

Systems and Tools

Changes that are to be tracked may not be visible within the time frame in which they are assessed (ibid: 14). Existing M&E systems are too narrow and thus inadequate for multi-layered formations, such as re-granting organizations like women's funds (ibid: 11). Most tools do not allow for tracking negative change, reversals, backlash, unexpected change, and other processes and only focus on positive change (ibid: 12). However, assessing negative change is crucial when

working in a field of complex realities, such as women's rights and women empowerment because it has to be included in future work strategies. False binaries and dichotomies, such as masculine-feminine or success-failure, are embedded within or underlie many M&E approaches (ibid: 13). Furthermore, problematic assumptions are embedded in most M&E tools regarding the capacity of their end-users, since they can be complicated and often require specific knowledge (ibid: 13). This argument is specifically relevant to the WHEAT Trust and their grantees, since women in rural, peri-urban areas or townships often only have limited access to formal education and some are even illiterate.

Gender

Many current assessment methods are neither gendered nor feminist in their principles or methodology (ibid: 16). Tracking less tangible but nevertheless crucial gender equality interventions is quite difficult with current M&E instruments (ibid: 13). This is especially interesting to consider in the case study on the WHEAT Trust as a feminist women's fund.

Keith-Brown et al. (2013) from the INWF[8] are currently conducting research about M&E in women's funds. It is a project over four years and is a reaction to the acknowledgement that most methods fail to incorporate a feminist view or accommodate diverse cultural perspectives, and the majority of their members responds only to donor interest in accountability and concrete outcomes rather than deepening understanding of how change takes place (INWF 2014c). In 2013 they published a report of the first research phase, which focuses on challenges and needs of women's funds in regards to M&E.

Limited Resources

Through their survey they identified five main limitations that affect M&E: time, financial resources, technical skills, adequate methodologies and tools, and qualified evaluators (ibid: 26). The lack of these resources does not only hinder

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[8] The WHEAT Trust is a member of the INWF

the M&E process itself, but also the incorporation of principles and values (ibid: 10). Resulting from these limitations, especially time, the efforts to assess the grantees' work are typically more developed than evaluation of their own work (ibid: 30). They found that in some women's funds there is even a lack of clarity about the difference between monitoring versus evaluation (ibid: 15).

Power Dynamics

Many women's funds stated that power dynamics exist between funder and grantees even when they try to create non-hierarchical settings (ibid: 10). The word monitoring causes discomfort by indicating a relationship where the grantee is being watched and/or signaling a lack of trust. Many women's funds worry that surfacing challenges transparently through M&E can jeopardize future funding, which demonstrates the inherent power dynamics that exist between donors and funders, as well as funders and grantees (ibid: 15).

Informal methods

Furthermore, the participating women's funds stated that M&E can feel mechanical and separated from learning goals, particularly when frameworks are donor driven or compliance-oriented (ibid). One of the main critiques was that informal processes are considered less legitimate by external actors and donor report formats do not ask about informal interactions and observations. This can be rooted in the difficulty of capturing informal processes since they are usually spontaneous and often undocumented (ibid: 22).

Grantees

Some women's funds claim that grantees sometimes do not understand the need for M&E and lack the skills needed to carry it out in a meaningful way (ibid: 25). Now it can be asked where the problem is. Do the grantees not have the skills or are the tools not grantee-friendly when working with grassroots women? Who has to meet whose needs?

Having to work in several languages can also be challenging and can influence the M&E processes and results (ibid). This is particularly important to consider in the South African context, where there are eleven official languages.

These two studies reveal certain challenges that frequently occur when M&E is carried out in women's organizations and women's funds in specific. These challenges are taken into consideration throughout the analysis of the WHEAT Trust's M&E approach.

4. Theoretical Framework

Theories are a researcher's way of analyzing what they see (Cunliffe 2008: 6). For this study the researchers lens is grassroots development and a combination of principal-agent theory and Naila Kabeer's (1999) women empowerment framework, which embed this research in a theoretical context.

4.1 Ontological and Epistemological Standpoint

The role of science is to explain social phenomena, to focus attention on particular issues and to challenge conventionally held beliefs about the social and natural worlds (May 2001: 8). What distinguishes social from natural sciences is that researchers are able to ask questions of those they study (ibid). It implies that a social science researcher has to grasp the concepts that people apply in their behavior (Giddens 1997: 12). Through theories, understandings of the social world become challenged (May 2001: 8).

This thesis falls mainly in the school of thought of *critical realism*. The task of researchers within this tradition is to uncover the structures of social relations in order to understand why we have the practices that we do (ibid: 12). The research question about challenges and opportunities in the WHEAT Trust's M&E encompasses structural dynamics and conditions as well as and why these challenges and opportunities arise in the context of this case study. For example, the principal-agent theory is applied to shed light on power dynamics that can emerge between different stakeholders, which in turn influence how M&E is carried out, and what is seen as important to be assessed through it. Accessing different layers of reality (individual, interactive and institutional) is the task of critical realist research and bringing to the attention of people how they affect their actions in a situation of dialogue and cooperation (ibid: 13). This research tradition is based on the thought that there is a world existing independently of our interpretation (realism) (Sayer 2000: 2) while acknowledging that there is a need to understand the process by which people interpret the world (May 2001: 13).

From a realist perspective, scientific knowledge is not the only valid type of knowledge. Critical realists are *critical* towards existing ideas and aim to identify problems such as unmet needs, suffering, false beliefs and their source (Sayer 2000: 159). Critical realism is also discussed in connection to case studies, as an attempt to determine their contribution to theory-building in social science (Hammersley, Gomm & Foster 2000: 236). Hence, critical realism can be seen as the underlying meta-theory of science in this thesis.

At the same time there is also an influence of *feminist standpoint theory* in this thesis, which is introduced through the grassroots development approach. Standpoint theory emerged in the 1970s as a feminist critical theory about relations between production of knowledge and practices of power (Harding 1997: 382; Harding 2004a: 1; Crasnow 2009). In that sense, one dimension of power is concerned with the rules and methods of legitimizing some voices and discrediting others (Mosedale 2005: 250). Haraway (1988: 578) explains that in standpoint theories, which are based on the ideas of Marxism, 'reality' looks different from the various social classes or social groups and that in turn introduces bias in science. Therefore, she argues that knowledge is socially situated (Haraway 1988). Epistemologically, standpoint theory is presented as a way of empowering oppressed groups, of valuing their experiences and of pointing toward a way to develop an "oppositional consciousness" (Harding 2004a: 2). Harding (1991) claims that women's social experiences provide a vantage point for discovering male bias. Applied to this case study, grassroots women in South Africa and the WHEAT Trust would then have a vantage point over large donors for example, because they are the experts of their situation. Therefore, the majority of respondents for this thesis were the grassroots women themselves, as the goal was to get an insight into their experience on the topic.

4.2 Grassroots Development

Grassroots development, also referred to as bottom-up development, is localized and contextually rooted, small in scale, culturally sensitive, democratic and

participatory, and centers on empowerment of the poor or any other target group in question. Grassroots development is thus centered on and emerges from the communities themselves (Parnwell 2008: 113). According to Potter (2008: 69), the bottom-up approach is a normative and rather holistic development theory, which became popular in the 1980s and belongs to the category of alternative approaches. It emerged as a response to large-scale, universal, government-driven national programs that failed to meet the particular needs of the local people. Participation and empowerment are two main principles which are applied in grassroots development (Jönsson et al. 2012: 68).

This approach refers precisely to the kind of work that the WHEAT Trust funds. WHEAT provides resources to support grassroots women organizations. The work is guided by the principle that women in South Africa find their own workable solutions to their problems, as they state in their mission. Parnwell (2008: 113) sees *conscientization* as fundamental in enabling the target group to understand the root causes of their problems and design appropriate solutions. It is supposed to lead to a greater sense of ownership and identity with the process of development.

In this study the grassroots development theory provides the foundation of what kind of work is to be monitored and evaluated within the development context.

4.3 Principal-Agent Theory, Women Empowerment and How They Go Together

Considering the problem statement, the relationship between the stakeholders involved in the work of the women's fund and how this organizational environment influences their M&E practice is one of the core issues. The principal-agent theory deals with the relationship between actors, and provides an interesting insight into this research. According to McLean and McMillan (2009) the principal-agent problem is defined as follows:

> Whenever an individual (the principal) has another person (the agent) perform a service on her behalf and cannot fully observe the agent's actions, a 'principal–agent problem' arises. (…) 'Agency theory' (also known as 'principal–agent theory') focuses on mechanisms to reduce the 'problem', such as selecting certain types of agents, and instituting forms of monitoring and various amounts of positive and negative sanctions.

The principal-agent theory shall be used as a theoretical framework for the relationships and dynamics between donor and funder as well as funder and grantee. Originally, it was developed by economists to analyze employment contracts but is now also applied in other contexts (Heery & Noon 2008). In the original context an employer is the principal and the employee is the agent. The problem of asymmetric information in the principal-agent constellation is called the *agency dilemma* by Popović et al. (2012: 11).

Translated to the context of this thesis, the actor giving money is the principal and the actor receiving money and working with it is the agent. That means that the donor, as the principal, gives money to the women's trust, giving them a mandate with the expectation to distribute it to grantees. By accepting the money and hence the contract, the agent is bound to the requirements and expectations of the donor, which equals the principal's benefit. By distributing the money to the grantees and becoming a principal themselves, the women's trust creates another contract and hence the grantees are the agents. Principals ordinarily select their agents, which is therefore also applicable in this case (Nash & Pardo 2013: 331). Donors choose the WHEAT Trust and the WHEAT Trust chooses the grantees, both through an application process.

The principal hands over a mandate to the agent and expects the latter to work in their interest or at least meet certain expectations. For example, the donor gives money to the women's trust, expecting the money to be spent on a specific group of grantees, e.g. income-generating organizations. By distributing the money to the grantees, the women's trust becomes a principal themselves because they also require the money to be spent on the cause that the grantee stated in their grant application, e.g. an awareness training on GBV for women in the community, and

not for example for all participants to go on holidays. That means that through the specification the donor wants to make sure that the money is not used for the self-interest of the women's trust, by spending it on other purposes. Then, the women's trust distributes the money and the grantee signs *Terms and Conditions*, agreeing to use it for the intended cause. In both cases the principal is not present when the actual work is carried out by the agent, which is another typical characteristic in the principal-agent problem.

Another aspect of the principal-agent problem is the question of how to develop incentives that lead agents to report truthfully to the principal (Black et al. 2009b). Here the connection to M&E becomes very clear. The principals ask for reports from the agents on how they spent the money and what the outcome of it was. The word *truthfully* is crucial considering the previous argument that in many cases M&E often merely answers donor requests with prescribed M&E frameworks.

The theory further indicates that incentives to act in the principal's interest include rewards such as bonuses or promotion for success, and penalties such as downgrading or dismissal for failing to do so (ibid). It is part of the following case study, if such rewards or sanctions are used as a response to M&E outcomes and how that affects M&E practice.

Through M&E the principal is monitoring the work of the agent, which creates a strong potential for hierarchical situations to arise and introduces the issue of power. Power is a central topic that runs throughout M&E. In practical terms it comes down to the different ideas of change and impact from different stakeholders and their influence on M&E approaches.

A limitation of the application of this theory is that the different stakeholders in this case study do not work for the same organization. Therefore, it could be argued that the contracts in this context differ to an employment contract. Nevertheless, I claim it applies very well to this situation, because it describes the multi-layered constellation of actors that form part of a trust (donors, trust, grantees as trustors, trustees, beneficiaries), as mentioned above. Therefore, the

relationships and the consequences for M&E resulting from them can be analyzed adequately through this theory.

The principal-agent theory introduces *agency*, which is an integral object of development frameworks captured by various authors, such as Sen (2001) and Gill (2009), as mentioned before. It is also part of concepts of empowerment, such as the one of the feminist development theorist Naila Kabeer (1999). She conceptualizes women empowerment incorporating three dimensions: resources, agency and achievements. She refers to *resources* in the sense of access and future claims of material, human and social resources. By *agency* she means the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. In that sense, agency is about more than observable action. It also encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity, their sense of agency, or as Kabeer calls it "the power within" (Kabeer 1999: 438). Agency can cover a wide scope from decision-making over negotiation to resistance. It is only when the failure to achieve one's goals reflects some deep-seated constraint on the ability to choose that it can be taken as a manifestation of disempowerment. *Achievements* are defined as all possible ways of 'being and doing' which are valued by people in a given context. She refers to Amartya Sen (1985) who uses the idea of *functionings* to refer to all possible ways of 'being and doing' which are valued by people in a given context and of *functioning achievements* to refer to the particular ways of being and doing which are realized by different individuals. Kabeer makes a very important point when it comes to the measurement of achievements, which applies to M&E in the context of this thesis:

> However, while there are sound reasons for moving the measurement of achievements beyond very basic functionings, such as life-expectancy, to more complex achievements, such as political representation, we have to keep in mind that such measurements, quite apart from their empirical shortcomings, entail the movement away from the criteria of women's choices, or even the values of the communities in which they live, to a

definition of 'achievement' which represents the values of those who are
doing the measuring (Kabeer 1999: 440).

This argument forges a bridge to the criticism that was mentioned in the
previous sections about *who* defines *what* is to be measured.

Hence, combining the two theories with the key elements of *principal* and
agent as well as *resources*, *agency* and *achievements* and relating it to the case
of this thesis leads to the following: the *principal* provides *resources* to the
agent and assesses the *agent's achievements* through M&E. In the grassroots
development framework agency plays a crucial role since the agent is situated
on grassroots level. Thus, in the analysis chapter I elucidate how the work of
grassroots women as the agents is monitored and evaluated by the principal(s)
in the context of the WHEAT Trust as a feminist local women's fund in South
Africa.

5. Methodology

5.1 Case Study

It is important to note that different methods influence the type of knowledge we obtain. Methods are a tool to illustrate reality while also limiting our understanding of it (Jönsson et al. 2012: 190). This is a *qualitative study* because it seeks to understand the experience and understanding of the stakeholders involved. A quantitative approach would not do justice to the research question and the approach of this study because the data cannot be quantified and analyzed through statistics.

More precisely, it is a qualitative *case study* because a specific case, the WHEAT Trust, is at the core of this study. A case study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context (Yin 2009: 1). They benefit from prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (ibid: 14), which was done in the previous sections by stating challenges that have been identified through previous research as well as the theoretical framework. According to Moll (2012: 5) case studies are particularly suited to research questions that require a detailed understanding of social or organizational processes. An organizational case study approach provides an opportunity for in-depth exploration of the issues within the context of work. One of the advantages of a case study is the opportunity to get close to the social actors and interactions in day-to-day practice (ibid: 6). She further argues that a case study is more of a research strategy than a method. Case study research may adopt multiple methods, such as observation, surveys, interviews, focus groups or document analysis (ibid).

Hence this strategy is suitable, as this study includes interviews and the review of documents as the main sources of data. Prior to the fieldwork I conducted my internship as part of my studies at the WHEAT Trust for two months, which created the entry point for this thesis. I returned to the WHEAT premises during the three months of fieldwork for this thesis, all of which

provided me with an observational insight into the organization and its functioning.

Generalizability of research results is usually one of the aims, whereas in case studies it is argued that their aim should be to capture cases in their uniqueness rather than to use them as a basis for wider generalization or theoretical inference (Hammersley & Gomm 2000: 3). Since the WHEAT Trust is such a specific type of women's fund with a niche target group, a case study does justice to its type of organization by shedding light on their specific circumstances and experiences. The fact that it is a specific case that is studied does not mean it is excluded from a broader context of discussion. A case study can add another perspective and can be useful for understanding a particular situation (ibid: 6). In this case it is the understanding of M&E with grassroots women's organizations in South Africa through the WHEAT Trust. As Lincoln and Guba (2000: 27) write: "The trouble with generalizations is that they don't apply to particulars", or "The only generalization is: There is no generalization".

With a particular reference to organizational case studies Moll (2012: 9) claims that language often reflects institutional ideology, as well as professional training and socialization. It is important, however, to move beyond these official discourses in order to understand the day-to-day complexities of organizational life. This should be kept in mind for the following analysis.

5.2 Case Selection

The overall aim of this study is to analyze the WHEAT Trust's M&E approach through the experiences of the stakeholders. The WHEAT Trust is a case of particular interest because of its specific target group. Some of WHEAT's grantee organizations are so small and new that they are not even registered yet as an NPO. Not many funders provide grants to these kinds of organizations, since most of them require at least an NPO number as assurance of formal establishment. Such grassroots initiatives often do not meet the general requirements to be acknowledged by donors and funders. Many of WHEAT's grantees are women

that work from their own homes with their own resources. Nevertheless, in line with the grassroots development approach, it is argued that such initiatives have a huge impact on the lives of these women and their communities and therefore the issue of M&E is important to be addressed in regards to the recognition of their work.

5.3 Data Collection

5.3.1 Interviews and Sampling

To get to know the different opinions on M&E by the people that are actively involved in WHEAT's M&E process, I conducted *semi-structured interviews* with five WHEAT staff members and nine grantees[9]. According to May (2001: 123) semi-structured interviews are a method that allows the researcher to guide the interview thematically and at the same time gives the interviewee the opportunity to explore the subject. Semi-structured interviews can incorporate elements of both quantifiable, fixed-choice responding and the facility to explore, and probe in more depth, certain areas of interest. Thus, this type of interview carries with it the advantages of both approaches. It is generally easy to analyze and compare, but allows interviewees to explain their responses and to provide more in-depth information where necessary. It also carries with it the disadvantages of both approaches, which are the temptation to spend too long on peripheral subjects, the danger of losing control to the interviewee, and the reduction in reliability when using non-standardized approaches to interview each respondent (Brewerton & Millward 2001: 70). For this research, interview guides[10] with open-ended questions were used to guide the interviews thematically. Two different interview guides were used for staff members and grantees in order to use the right formulations for the two groups and ask each group some additional questions, but all the questions aimed at the same issues and they were designed to be as similar as possible. The interview questions were mainly guided by issues raised

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[9] By grantee I mean a representative of a grassroots organization that has been granted by WHEAT
[10] See Appendix I

in previous research, which were discussed in the sections above. In addition to each grantee interview, an interview protocol[11] was filled out by the researcher to document the context of each interview as well as thoughts and additional field notes.

Purposive sampling is a commonly used sampling strategy in case studies (Flick 2009: 134) and was also used in this study. According to Robinson (2014: 32) purposive sampling strategies are non-random ways of ensuring that particular categories of cases within a sampling universe are represented in the final sample of a project. In this research it was staff members and representatives of grantee organizations.

Five of WHEAT's eight permanent staff members were interviewed and the selection was based on their involvement in M&E. The three staff members that were not interviewed are not involved in the M&E process whatsoever. The work positions of the staff members interviewed are not disclosed here in order to protect their anonymity. The interviews were conducted between April 25 2014 and May 26 2014 and all of them took place at the WHEAT office in a separate room. In the transcripts the abbreviations S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5 were used for the five different interviewees. The numbers were given randomly, not in the timely order in which the interviews took place. Confidentiality and anonymity are especially important when doing research in a specific setting, such as an organization in this case (Flick 2009: 42).

The nine grantees were selected by the following criteria: They received a grant from WHEAT in 2013[12] and they were based in the Cape Town area so that each of them could be visited in person and face-to-face interviews could be conducted. Then they were narrowed down to the ones that could speak English so that all the interviews could be conducted without an interpreter. From all the grantees that fit those criteria the selection of three grantees that received a grant for the first time, three that received a grant from WHEAT twice and three grantees that received a grant from WHEAT more than twice was made in order

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[11] See Appendix II
[12] In 2013 WHEAT granted 105 grantees in total out of which 44 are based in the Western Cape Province.

to reach grantees with a short as well as with a longer history with WHEAT. Within this group of nine grantees there were purposively some included that would give critical answers as well. This choice of length of relationship and critical answers was made in order to reach a broader spectrum of opinions within the small sample group. The selection of grantees was made in communication with a WHEAT staff member because of her knowledge on who fits the criteria. In short, purposive sampling was applied, combined with geographical and language limitations. In the transcripts of the grantee interviews the abbreviations G1-G9 were used. The numbers have no indication on the order in which they had been conducted so as to assure their anonymity. All of the interview partners were the founders of their organization and the contact person with the WHEAT Trust. The interviews were conducted between May 19 2014 and June 2 2014. Six of them were conducted at the project site, of which three of them were also the women's homes. Upon the wish of one grantee, the interview was conducted in a public place, one grantee asked me to come to her work office that was unrelated to her project and one grantee came into the WHEAT office upon her own suggestion, because at the time it was too dangerous to go into the community she works in. The foci of the organizations covered a broad spectrum, from Montessori teacher training in townships, LGBTI rights, skills training, gender-based violence, HIV/Aids support, substance abuse, income-generation, empowerment of young girls and an art project.

5.3.2 Review of Documents

Part of a case study can also be to review documents that are available, accessible and related to the subject of study (Yin 2009: 85). For this study I had access to WHEAT's annual report, grant criteria document, grant report template, donors' report templates, as well as the grant reports from the grantees that were interviewed. These documents were used to see how the M&E approach is at the moment, what questions it includes and how the donors' report templates differ.

5.4 Limitations and Ethical Considerations

On a reflective note about me conducting interviews with WHEAT staff members I would say that my position was more of an insider than outsider since I had done my internship there previously, but I would not consider myself entirely as an insider since I am not a staff member myself. Due to the fact that it is a small and personal organization I already had a close relationship with them. My previous experience at the organization and the good working relationship that was established during the internship granted me access to this research in the first place but also created an acquainted environment for me as a researcher. It granted me access not only to staff members but also to the WHEAT Trust's grantees, documents, and grant report templates. A shortcoming regarding my previous history with the organization could be that my personal perception of their work could influence my research and analysis although through constant reflection on this issue, I tried to avoid it in all conscience. The study was designed in such a way that my influence was excluded as far as possible, as suggested by Flick (2009: 13). Nevertheless, subjectivity of the researcher and of those being studied is part of qualitative research processes and through reflexivity it becomes part of knowledge (ibid: 16). The personal connection and communication between researcher and research participants is a challenge in qualitative research (ibid). It is vital for it and limits it at the same time.

Through WHEAT I had access to the grassroots women's organizations. Hence WHEAT was participating in my research and acted as a gatekeeper to the grantees at the same time. In regards to organizational case study research, Moll (2012: 6) notes that it is critical to consider how much power the stakeholders will have over the final product and that gatekeepers can lead to agendas and ideas that they would like to be represented in the study (ibid: 7). Again, to all conscience this was avoided in the study.

In my initial email[13] to the grantees I explained my situation, my connection to WHEAT and my research. All of them agreed to participate in my study, either

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[13] See Appendix III

directly in response to my email or during a phone call that I made to the ones that did not reply within a few days. None of them hesitated to agree to participate and they were very helpful in finding a date and time for me to come and visit them.

A shortcoming of the selection of grantees is that they are all based in Cape Town and are therefore physically close to WHEAT, which gives them the opportunity to interact with WHEAT in a different way than grantees that are based far away in other provinces. To include the latter in the study would have exceeded the capacities of this thesis and therefore further research in other provinces is recommended to reach a broader spectrum of grantees.

It is also worth considering that some of the interviews with grantees were not conducted alone, meaning that other people were present during some of the interviews. For logistical as well as safety reasons I never went alone to the interviews and had between one and four[14] other people with me. I always asked the interviewees if they would like to conduct the interview in private and they all pointed out that they did not mind that other people were around. I believe that it did not have an effect on their answers. Had I gotten the feeling I would have asked the others to leave. But of course it has to be mentioned that it could have had an influence on their answers. On the other hand it could have benefitted me as a European student that I came with South Africans and/or with a familiar staff member, because it might have made it easier for the grantees to relate to me and see me less as a stranger.

Regarding my personal role and influence on the interviews it should be noted that I only met one of these grantees during my previous internship[15]. Therefore, no personal history influenced the interviews. In my initial email as well as before every interview I explained to them that I did my internship at WHEAT and now I was there writing my thesis about their M&E approach, but that I was not there as a WHEAT intern but as an independent researcher. I

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[14] The four people were WHEAT interns, one new part-time staff member and one permanent WHEAT staff member. The permanent staff member was only present in one interview. Another time a person that is unrelated to the WHEAT Trust accompanied me.

[15] The former meeting was only brief and I was not in direct or personal interaction with the grantee, I was only accompanying WHEAT staff members.

assured them that their answers would not have any influence on future granting and that I was interested in the good and the bad, and that they could also talk about challenges and/or criticism that they face with the WHEAT Trust. With some of the grantees it could have been a limitation that I did not speak their first language. The interviews were conducted in English, which is neither my first language nor the first language of some of the grantees. Therefore, misunderstandings and limitations in the scope of expression could have occurred on both sides. I chose the interviewees also on their ability to speak English so that I could conduct them myself without an interpreter, but this limitation has to be acknowledged.

All interviews were conducted after the interviewee's explicit statement of *informed consent*[16]. They were informed through an information sheet and orally that:

- the researcher is committed to confidentiality and data secrecy
- the thesis is done solely for scientific purposes
- the transcripts are anonymized to protect their identity
- no disadvantages arise from non-participation
- the research has no implications for future funding or influences their relationship with the WHEAT Trust
- they can refuse to answer individual questions
- the consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time.

Although it was mentioned repeatedly that their answers would influence neither their relationship with the WHEAT Trust nor future funding, it could have influenced their answers.

5.5 Method of Analysis

The data analysis was done with the help of the computer program MAXQDA 11. Programs referred to as Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) software do not do

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[16] See Appendixes IV and V for the information sheet and the consent form

qualitative analysis themselves, they merely make it easier to code and structure qualitative data (Flick 2009: 359, 367).

The analysis was done through *Qualitative Content Analysis* according to Mayring (2000). This type of analysis is one of the classical procedures for analyzing textual material, such as interview data (Flick 2009: 323). One of its essential features is the use of categories, which are the center of analysis and are often derived from theoretical models. It means that categories are brought to the empirical material, not necessarily developed from it, which is called *inductive category development* (Mayring 2000: 108). In this research categories have been created on the theoretical basis of the literature review and the issues stated by earlier research on M&E in women's funds. The main idea of the procedure is to formulate a criterion of definition, derived from theoretical background and research question, which determines the aspects of the textual material taken into account. The category definitions are put together within a coding agenda[17] (ibid: 108). However, it is a rather flexible process in the sense that categories are constantly assessed, modified and if necessary new categories can be created throughout the process (ibid).

The qualitative step of analysis consists in a methodological controlled assignment of the category to a passage of text, which is called *deductive category application*[18] (ibid). Paraphrasing and summarizing, what is called reducing the material, are the next steps after the categorization process, and prepare the material to be used for the written analysis (Flick 2009: 325).

This method is commonly used to analyze subjective viewpoints (ibid: 328), which is what makes it suitable for this case study. However, as any method, content analysis also includes points of criticism. A limitation of this analytical method is that the categorization based on theories may obscure the view of the contents rather than facilitate analyzing the text in-depth and underlying meanings. Furthermore, the use of paraphrases as a way of explaining and replacing the original material can be seen critically (ibid).

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[17] See Appendix VI for the coding agenda
[18] See Appendix VII for the step model of deductive category application according to Mayring

6. Analysis

To recall, the main research question and sub-questions are formulated as follows:

What are the challenges and opportunities in M&E with grassroots women's organizations from the viewpoint of the stakeholders in the context of a women's fund?

How is the relationship between funder and grantee perceived?

What are the understandings of success for the different stakeholders involved?

How does WHEAT Trust currently monitor and evaluate the work of their grantees?

How do the stakeholders experience it?

For the analysis of this thesis and answering the main research question, the questions that were considered important to be answered derived from the literature review and theoretical background. The relationship between funder and grantees should be looked at since they constitute the main part of this case study. Values and goals of the grantees as well as WHEAT shall be described since it could potentially create challenges in the M&E practice if they diverge to a great extent. The stakeholders were asked what they see as a successful or unsuccessful grantee. Through this question it should be established what they place value on in this particular funder-grantee situation.

Resulting from the understanding of the principal-agent relationship and from what was stated as being important on both sides; the WHEAT Trust's current M&E approach is analyzed from the perspective of staff and grantees. The questions are: What do the staff members state as reasons for doing M&E? What does the current approach consist of, as stated by the implementing side? What frameworks or principles is the current M&E approach based on? How do the agents experience reporting to the principal? In what ways do they do so and how do they perceive this process? How does WHEAT as the principal react or respond to M&E outcomes? Are there rewards or sanctions in place? What do the stakeholders think should be changed or improved in terms of WHEAT's M&E?

The analysis shall shed light onto the M&E experience of WHEAT and their grantees at grassroots level.[19]

6.1 Funder-Grantee Relationship

The principal-agent theory as well as the previous research on M&E suggests that the relationship between funder and grantees, in other words principal and agent, is a key element. The following description of the relationship is based on the experiences of the nine grantees that were interviewed as well as the staff members.

The majority of responses on how the grantees would describe their relationship with the WHEAT Trust were positive. Promotion of the WHEAT Trust to other grassroots organizations (G2), the wish to be a mentor for new grantees (G8) and the wish to work for the WHEAT Trust (G6) are all answers that imply a participatory environment, since the grantees seem to not only see themselves as recipients but also engage or want to engage in WHEAT's work directly. These grantees stated a close and good relationship with the WHEAT Trust, and their statements point to the experience of a rather non-hierarchical relationship. They described it as good (G9); welcoming (G6); motivational; and assuring (G3). Expressions such as "not a stranger", "not scared of them" (G7, G5) can be a sign that the grantee sees the potential of such a relationship with a funder. But in most interviews it stood out that the grantees referred to WHEAT as "people", "friends", "partners", which indicates that they experience their relationship mostly as good, personal and rather equal. The partnership was pointed out as crucial in order to work together successfully, and two said explicitly that they are successful because of the WHEAT Trust (G4, G5). One grantee referred to WHEAT as their "boss" (G5) but it did not have a negative

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[19] All interviews were transcribed verbatim and will be referenced according to the acronyms stated in section *5.3.1 Interviews and Sampling*. In terms of transcription rules: WORDS are written in capital letters when the speaker emphasized the word; (I: Mhm.) indicates that the interviewer said filler words while the respondent was speaking; (pauses) and (laughs) are indicated in parenthesis; ((incomprehensible)) passages or another language ((Xhosa)) in double parenthesis; - indicates interrupted speech.

connotation because she emphasized that she still sees them more as a partner and a resource:

> *"Yah they are my bosses but. (pause) I know that from like (pause) in my language, in our language, which is Xhosa, they say ((says something in Xhosa)) so it means that the knowledge you don't have, you should ask those ones that have. So I'm just- with them I'm like that. (I: Mhm.) So I know that, yah I'm proud with them"* (G5).

The grantees' answers indicate that most respondents experience a supportive environment and consider the relationship to the funder as instrumental for their progress, not only because they provide material resources but also because they feel supported.

Only two of the nine respondents said that their relationship was not that close (G1, G8). At the same time they both mentioned that they wished their relationship was closer. The grantee that had only received one grant so far interpreted miscommunications and the absence of a close relationship as a sign that the WHEAT Trust did not like them as grantees. She had the expectation that it would be like a "new child welcomed into a new family" (G1), which was not met according to her experience. It can indicate that young organizations and new grantees strive for a good and close relationship with the funder as a form of approval of their work. Hence, building a relationship was seen as a form of reward by this grantee.

The better and closer the relationship between principal and agent is in this context, the more it seems the agents want to cooperate and give back as well. The shortcoming of the choice of respondents is that they were all physically close to the WHEAT office and hence it is easier to create a personal relationship. Further research has to be conducted in the other South African provinces with grantees that do not have this opportunity. Nevertheless, it seems that especially on grassroots level, striving for a close relationship with the funder is crucial to the grantees since they might need more reassurance and assistance than well-established organizations, as in the case of respondent G1.

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From the side of the principal, the WHEAT staff, it was mentioned that they are aware of the power dynamics between funder and grantee and try to balance it out as much as possible by WHEAT being an equal partner to the grantees and having a close and transparent relationship with them (S4, S5, S2). This is not only important for them as a basis for successful M&E, but through grantees reporting truthfully, especially about challenges, WHEAT becomes informed on what the needs and challenges in the field are (S4). Hence, a good relationship with the grantees is crucial for many different areas of work within the WHEAT Trust. To support this approach of closeness and being informed by grantees, all staff members are encouraged to go on site visits (S4). Within grassroots development it is important to be guided by the agents in the field, since they are seen as the experts of their situation (Parnwell 2008: 113). Only in this way can the principal guide their work through the grassroots agents.

Considering the experienced relationship between funder and grantees as stated by the informants, the initial theory of principal-agent relationship has to be expanded for this case. Originally the agent has to work in the principal's interest. However, within grassroots development and the empowerment framework, the agent has to be the one who determines the appropriate way to development and successful change and the principal(s) should work in the agent's interest.

6.2 Values and Goals

Grantees' Values and Goals

It is crucial to get an idea of what the grantees define as their important goals and values in order to be able to capture their work in the field. As Vance (2009) argues, the fundamental question in assessing results is not *what are the indicators* but *what are we trying to measure* (ibid: 23). If this question is not asked, there is a risk that grantees are selling themselves short, since intangible results are rarely noted or valued in reports and evaluations (ibid: 26). Hence, an important element of M&E is to see what grantees want to achieve and what they

define for themselves as important values in their work. The following is a list of the respondents' answers[20]:

Education and development of young girls; self-sustainability of the organization; good leadership within the organization; create ownership of the participants for the project; strengthen self-help capacities of women affected by substance abuse; train participants in income-generation/business and management skills; politicize LGBTI issues; be diverse and dynamic and think ahead with what the organization offers; advocacy for gay rights as part of human rights; stop self-discrimination of the LGBTI community; feminism; promote respect for women; stop accepting patriarchy; training and skills-development for women to venture out of their community; meet the needs of the community; teach women on CV writing and finding a job; create awareness around gender-based violence; create a safe space for women suffering from abuse and domestic violence; have an open door for boys who need someone to talk to; early childhood development in marginalized communities; educate children so that they have the opportunity to get out of the townships; empower women; strengthen self-help capacities of women; reduce the risk of youth getting involved in gangsterism; raise self-esteem of women and youth in community.

As diverse, specific, narrow or broad as these goals are, they are key elements that should be captured by WHEAT's M&E in order to comprehend what grantees work with and want to achieve. It has to be remembered that those are only the answers of the nine grantees who were interviewed, but the WHEAT Trust has many more grantees per year. Therefore, the practical question is: how can the WHEAT Trust, as a principal, monitor and evaluate in a way that does justice to the grantees' work and individual situations? Another question that follows is if there should be indicators to assess the progress in reaching these goals. The topic of indicators is revisited later on.

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[20] To assure the anonymity of the respondents, the transcript acronyms are not included in this paragraph.

WHEAT's Values and Goals

Since WHEAT decides what questions are asked in the grant reports, it is also important to look at the WHEAT Trust's values and goals that were mentioned in the staff interviews.

The WHEAT Trust's vision is a Southern Africa where all women are able to access resources such as money, education, training and capacity building, and where all women can live their human rights (S5, S4, S2). This vision as the overall goal is supported by other goals and values that include all three dimensions of donors, WHEAT and the grantees: independency of the trust from their bigger donors in terms of what to fund; transparency towards grantees (S1); providing support and resources for women's organizations to find their own workable solutions (S5); assisting them in becoming self-sustainable (S3, S2); taking every grantee and the conditions in which they do their work into account individually (S1); and the principle of women helping other women (S2).

Empowerment is one of their most important goals, while being an aspect of the mission at the same time. Empowerment is their vision and mission, as they strive for women to be able to access resources and be the ones who decide how to solve their problems. The WHEAT Trust should not judge the grantees' work in its value and they do not tell them what to do to get money, but they see grantee agents of their own choices (S1). Hence WHEAT sees their grantees as being agents and experts of their situation (S5). Two staff members mentioned that WHEAT is aware of the power imbalance that exists between funder and a poor community and they try to work against it from the beginning so that grantees are empowered throughout the process (S5, S4). Part of this is their principle that they never want to speak on behalf of their grantees, since they see it as disempowering to do that (S4). In other words, they would take the agency away from them and deny them choice, which is also what Kabeer (1999: 436) defines as disempowerment.

Talking about goals leads to further reflection on what was mentioned in the previous chapters on challenges in M&E for women's organizations and women's

funds. It is problematic to focus on goals rather than on the process of change that should eventually lead to the goals. Hence, it is asked how grantees and WHEAT staff members define success.

6.3 What is Considered as (Un)Successful?

Successful and unsuccessful are strong expressions, and as mentioned previously, M&E systems should not be based on these (false) binaries (Batliwala and Pittman 2010). They were consciously used in the interviews to see how the interviewees respond to the use of them. It is examined at what the WHEAT Trust as well as the grantees themselves define as a successful or an unsuccessful grantee. Why is this important? In regards to the discourse around M&E as well as the principal-agent theory, the notion of successful/unsuccessful is constantly present, even if not always explicitly mentioned. A principal wants to know if the agent works successfully in their interest. In the context of this case study, who and what determines what a successful grantee is? What counts as success and what does not? Looking at Kabeer's (1999) women empowerment framework, success can be seen as what she calls *achievements*, which are to be reported back to the principal in the principal-agent constellation.

On a general note about the definition of success, a staff member argued that success can be measured in different ways, and the WHEAT Trust wants to challenge people and donors in terms of how to measure success, considering their experience in working with grassroots women's organizations (S4). For another staff member the word success implies a value judgment about who according to whose standards does well or does not do well (S1). Connecting her statement with the theoretical framework, it means that donors have their own ideas of success, so does the WHEAT Trust and so do the grantees. Donors as the first principals measure the implementation of their grants to WHEAT according to their own idea of successful impact, asking questions which might not be the same questions that are important to the WHEAT Trust, the second principal, or the grantees' ideas about success (S1). If the different stakeholders' ideas about

success are very divergent, monitoring and evaluating grantees' work can become a challenge, which, according to previous research, is frequently the case (Batliwala & Pittman 2010; Keith-Brown et al. 2013).

Successful

The nine grantees that were interviewed answered the following when asked what a successful grantee is to them: have the administration in place to make the organization sustainable (G9); work together as group and a team; have focus, perseverance and willingness (G8); reach religious leaders and community leaders in regards to LGBTI issues (G7); be awarded the grant and use the money wisely to benefit the community (G6); make it through struggles and challenges (G5); be responsive to the needs in the community (G5, G4); be known in the community as a place to go and a shelter; even men come and want to talk to you; be able to use computers (G4); use the grant for what it was intended; assess the outcome and if needed re-strategize and move on (flexibility) (G3); not to struggle with funding (G2); write a good proposal and being given the opportunity to change something in the community (G1). The grantees' perceptions of success cover a broad spectrum, from merely receiving the grant, which quite a few grantees mentioned as success, over being flexible and responsive to the needs of the community, to strategic success e.g. including religious and community leaders in work on LGBTI issues.

The staff members answered as follows on what a successful grantee is to them: show knowledge and understanding of the specific needs in the community; use the funds in a way that is in line with the funders values as well as your own; further the achievement of the mission (S5); have a clear plan on what is needed to achieve change in a community; be able to make an impact in communities with a small amount of money; a grantee that stands up to a community chief and tackles patriarchal norms and structures in that way; a woman who walks out of an abusive relationship (S4); be able to access other funders except the WHEAT Trust (S3, S1); be financially self-sustainable (S2); account for the grant; a

grantee that works on either practical or strategic gender needs and plays a crucial role within the community (S1).

One staff member pointed out that it has to be taken into consideration that different grantees work under different conditions, circumstances, at different paces and sometimes from the outside it might look like they are not as successful as others (S1). Therefore, she chose a different definition of success for herself:

"I don't look at them as successful grantees, but I look at grantees that really spring to mind (I: Mhm.) in terms of grantees that I think are really doing well under specific circumstances" (S1).

Another staff member argued that even the consciousness of being able to change something can be seen as success (S4), which could be only starting a project with the consciousness of being an active agent. This is exactly what Parnwell (2008: 113) refers to as conscientization in the grassroots development framework and how Kabeer (1999: 438) defines agency, as encompassing the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity, their sense of agency, or 'the power within'.

Unsuccessful

To make the understanding of success more holistic, it is interesting to note what the grantees' and the staff members' ideas of an unsuccessful grantee are. The grantees answered as follows: A grantee that has no basic organizational structures in place and "only works with their heart" (G9); laziness (G8); not to get enough funding to carry out their work (G7); misuse the funds (G6); fail to keep their promises to the participants in the community (G5); not to be able to keep the volunteers motivated (G4); not to receive the grant (G3, G2); not to be able to re-structure and be inflexible; repeat the same mistakes; not meeting the needs of the community (G3); giving up (G2); not to meet the WHEAT Trust's criteria (G1).

Two staff members define unsuccessful as a grantee that does not adhere to the grant-agreement with no intention to do so, and accessing grant under false

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pretenses and failing to report on it (S1, S5). Another one mentions no development of the organization after being re-granted multiple times, or an organization that falls apart after receiving a grant (S3). Also a grantee that only relies on external funding without making any effort to become self-sustainable is seen as unsuccessful (S2). Hence, the staff members' answers focus on misusing funds, no accountability and unsustainability.

The following argument of a staff member is important to note regarding WHEAT's M&E approach: a grantee that fails in doing what they set themselves up to, but reports on it in an accountable manner; or a grantee that gives the money back to WHEAT is not considered unsuccessful (S1). It indicates that for the WHEAT Trust as a grant-maker, one of the central aspects in M&E is accountability. At the same time it becomes clear that they keep the focus on their target group, taking into account that they work with grassroots organizations, acknowledging that failure can happen, by not considering those cases unsuccessful.

6.4 Reasons for Doing M&E

The staff members were asked for their reasons for doing M&E, to shed light on their understanding it.

The main reasons named were to be kept informed about the experiences of the grantees on grassroots level and their impact (S5, S4, S3); responsibility and accountability by the grantees (S5); see what WHEAT is spending the money on and where change happened; make sure money goes to the organizations that fit the grant criteria and to uncover fraudulent grantees; report back to donors (S2); constantly and consciously look if things are going according to plan; reflect on what the grantees' work means to WHEAT and what the results are (S1). Additionally it was highlighted that the reason for doing M&E should not be to discipline (S1).

Even though this question was not explicitly asked in the interviews with the grantees, three of them stated that M&E is necessary to show accountability (G7,

G5, G1) and that they see it as important for the funder to know what the money was used for and if the money was used in a good way (G5, G1).

6.5 Current M&E Approach

Pillars of the Current Approach

According to the respondents WHEAT's current M&E approach includes several pillars. The main pillar and only formal method is the grant report that the grantees have to hand in within three months after receiving the grant (S1-S5). Furthermore, site visits are conducted, and M&E takes place through informal methods such as phone calls (S2) and having an open-door policy (S5). Another staff member mentioned workshops and convenings in the different provinces as part of M&E (S3).

What stood out were the different perceptions of the staff members on what the main part of M&E is. While for some the focus was on reports (S1, S4), others stated that M&E mainly consists of phone calls (S2) or site visits (S3). Also, the time or timespan when M&E takes place was perceived differently. While one staff member said the M&E process happens before, during and after the grant, and largely through phone calls (S2), another respondent said it is mainly done at the end of the grant agreement through the reports, and for those grantees that do not re-apply it is only once-off, otherwise it is more continuous through re-application (S1). These different opinions can probably be explained by the working position of each of those staff members and the value they place on the different methods in their daily work. It can also indicate a conflation of M&E as being one process, instead of clearly distinguishing *monitoring* from *evaluation.*

Informal M&E

One staff member claimed that it is "not a very sophisticated M&E system" (S1) but the respondent sees value in informal M&E tools that need to be strengthened and included in the current approach. Site visits and telephonic follow-ups are the

main informal methods that are used as M&E tools in WHEAT's current approach as well as informal interactions and observations. According to respondent S1, M&E on the informal level is not documented and not according to any set indicators, it includes spontaneous calls, continuous communication, and in her opinion the informal level is one of WHEAT's strengths. Another staff member argued that phone calls and conversations are more effective than emails or faxes because the grantee's tone of voice can give you a good impression of the grantee's situation (S2). It becomes clear that the informal M&E relies even more on the funder-grantee/principal-agent relationship.

6.6 Framework and Indicators

Framework

In the following statement Batliwala and Pittman (2010) address an important issue regarding M&E frameworks:

> "Underlying the approach are certain beliefs or hypotheses, at times explicit or not, about what constitutes effective performance, impact, and change. In this sense, both frameworks and specific approaches shape how our work is monitored or evaluated, and as a result shape what we can say about impact" (ibid: 6).

Hence, this has to be taken into consideration, especially when multiple principals are involved that might have different frameworks and underlying principles as in this case study.

To get an idea of what WHEAT is assessing through their report as the only formal tool, the questions that are formulated in the report template shall be looked at. It includes questions about

- how the grant was used (financial report)
- how the grant helped to achieve their goal
- what activity/training was undertaken
- who the main direct and indirect beneficiaries were

- which other groups or service providers were involved
- what changes happened in the group
- how the activity/training contributed to the mission and vision
- what challenges and opportunities came up during the implementation
- what the way forward is
- and if and how another grant would help to develop the organization further.

The questions seem to aim at drawing a picture of what happened in the organization through the process of implementing the grant, while also trying to assess what other resources or networks the grantee organization has.

According to respondent S1, the gender needs approach by Caroline Moser (1989) is, although undocumented, the underlying framework of WHEAT's work as well as their M&E approach. Moser distinguishes strategic and practical gender needs. Strategic gender needs are formulated from the analysis of women's subordination to men in order to achieve a more equal and satisfactory organization of society than that which exists at present, in terms of both the structure and nature of relationships between men and women. Practical gender needs are those needs which are formulated from the concrete conditions women experience, in their engendered position within the sexual division of labor, and deriving out of this their practical gender interests for human survival. Unlike strategic gender needs they are formulated directly by women in these positions, rather than through external interventions. Practical needs therefore are usually a response to an immediate perceived necessity which is identified by women within a specific context (ibid: 1803). Resulting from this framework, part of the WHEAT Trust's M&E is to see what opportunities a grantee that works on practical gender needs level has to start identifying strategic gender needs (S1). This reflects the WHEAT Trust's characteristic as a feminist women's fund. Apart from this framework, empowering principles were also named as a basis of the M&E approach (S1).

Indicators

A central question in the discussions on M&E is about indicators. Several authors were already referred to regarding this topic in previous chapters. They mainly argued that indicators are not necessarily what needs to be looked at in M&E in this context (Vance 2009; Batliwala & Pittman 2010). The staff members' claims about indicators are examined, which become important in regards to Kabeer's (1999: 440) argument, as she calls attention to the definition of *achievement* which represents the values of those who are doing the measuring.

One staff member said that besides certain standards the grantees have to comply with, such as accounting for the money, they are assessed according to their own standard, which means depending on their application, what problem they identified and the solution they outlined (S5). It means that the indicators are set by grantees, the agents, themselves. Another staff member argued that the main indicators for re-granting are if a grantee organization shows potential, has a clear vision or goal and accounts for the money (S1). This respondent spoke out against M&E as a measurement, as checking "whether you've managed to count all the numbers" (S1) and rather for M&E that seeks to find out how the work made the grantees feel, what it made them learn and how that informs their next steps (S1). While it could be interpreted as an argument against quantitative methods and for more focus on 'soft facts', this statement could also be interpreted as a misunderstanding of M&E, as seeing monitoring and evaluation as one and the same thing. What S1 refers to as measurement would be an evaluation whereas reviewing the process would be monitoring. In their research on M&E in women's funds Keith-Brown et al. (2013: 15) also found that this can be a problem in M&E practice. The issue of numbers was also addressed by respondent S4, who raised the point of different ideas of impact by the two principals, donors and funder. She claims that donors often look for numbers whereas for the WHEAT Trust a woman walking out of an abusive relationship as the result of a grantee's work is seen as a success. This staff member goes so far

to say that donors should change their report templates because they are not suitable for the target group that the WHEAT Trust funds (S4).

Based on the statements above it can be said that informally a framework exists, which is not a specific M&E framework, but a framework that shapes the WHEAT Trust's work as a whole. However, it does not explicitly influence the questions that are asked in the WHEAT Trust's report template, but more how the reports are interpreted by the staff members. The issue of indicators is seen skeptically.

6.7 Donors' Report Templates

Since donors' report templates were mentioned several times, in the literature review as well as by interview partners, some of the WHEAT Trust's donors' report templates are reviewed. The WHEAT Trust provided me with three templates because I wanted to include them as part of the case study. For anonymity reasons, names of specific donors are not mentioned and only the type of donor referred to is indicated.

One corporate donor provided money to the WHEAT Trust for income-generating projects. At the beginning of the report template, the donor highlights that difficulties should also be reported and that there are no penalties for failure. Their report template is shaped by business terms and indicators. They ask about the growth of the businesses, increase in profit, how many jobs were created, financial performance, equity and other funding. It is clear that their report template is closely tied to the specific type of grant that they donated.

Another corporate donor's template is called *Impact Assessment Form*. In the beginning they ask for opinions and perceptions about the donor itself as a funder. In the main part of the report they ask to identity different stakeholder groups that were affected by the program/project and the qualitative and quantitative indicators of impact. Furthermore, they ask for different aspects of impact that were achieved through the grant, which are economic; social; environmental; short-, medium-, and long-term; positive; negative; combined;

intended/unintended; and direct/indirect. At the end they ask for lessons learnt or any other comments that the recipient wants to share with the donor. This report template is not as specific as the one above and could be used for any of the thematic areas that are funded by the WHEAT Trust. The focus on impact is clearly notable.

Another type of donor is a larger women's fund. In their report template they ask about undertaken activities; exceptional successes; challenges; lessons learned; future plans; the general views of the community about issues covered by the project; to what extent behavior (attitudes, beliefs and practices) has changed as a result of the project; what specific policies and legislations (if any) have emerged as a result of the project; in what ways women participated in the development, management and implementation of the project; and a financial report. This report template emphasizes the aspect of change and asks a specific question on women's participation.

Looking at the WHEAT Trust's statements on frameworks and indicators, as well as at the three examples of donor report templates, it becomes clear that there are different ways in which M&E is carried out. What stands out is the difference between the CSI donors and women's funds. Whereas the CSI donor templates are focused on facts, numbers and impact, the women's fund's template is structured more like WHEAT's own template and focuses more on the process and what has changed for the organization and beyond.

Every donor has their own template and therefore it is important to note that no general statements on donors should be made at this point. However, many of the criticisms on donor's templates that were mentioned in the literature review and previous analysis chapters become reinforced through the sample that was available for this study.

6.8 Grantees' Perceptions of M&E

The analysis of WHEAT's M&E approach in the two sections above is shaped by the perspective of the staff. Since the agents are crucial agents in the grassroots

development framework, it is now analyzed how the grantees that were interviewed for this study perceive M&E, what they see as *reporting* and how they feel about it.

When asked about the ways of reporting or informing the WHEAT Trust about their work, all the grantees mentioned the grant report (G1-G9). Overall, the opinion was that the report was not difficult to fill out and they see it as a necessary tool of accountability (G7, G6, G5, G4, G1). Two grantees mentioned that they also see the report as a good tool for their own reflection on their work within the organization, apart from reporting to WHEAT (G3, G6). It was said that the report template was grantee-friendly. The same grantee also mentioned submitting receipts and additional evidence, like written stories of the participants themselves as part of her reporting to the WHEAT Trust (G9). Another respondent highlighted that she liked the open ended questions because the grantee can decide how simple or extensive they want to report (G6). She felt proud when they could submit all the receipts and show that they really used the money for the intended cause (G6). Another grantee mentioned that she likes in particular that she feels like WHEAT understands that some grantees are not that educated and appreciates that they do not care about spelling or grammar mistakes (G5). Once she got help in filling out the report from an intern of the WHEAT Trust, which according to her helped her especially with the formulations in English, another grantee said she prefers to go to the WHEAT office and fill out the report there with the help of a staff member (G2). Respondent G1 finds the report important from the viewpoint of the funder because they need to know if the grantee used the money effectively or if someone else could have done better work with it. One grantee mentioned that to her reporting is important because it is a means to earn the trust of the funder (G4).

Eight out of nine grantees mentioned site visits. Many of them said they invite the WHEAT Trust to their events or project sites (G9, G6, G2, G3), it is perceived as a form of support (G6), as a way of comparing 'reality' to what was written in the report (G7, G1), as a way of personal interaction and seeing beyond the report (G9) and making sure that WHEAT sees in what environment/under

which conditions the work is done (G4), as a way to see the situation of the grantee (G5), to see how the money was spent (G3), and to make sure that an organization really exists (G1).

It seems that there is a high level of understanding from the grantees on the grant report as a necessary tool for accountability. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the importance of site visits as an assessment of the 'real work' stands out. Inviting a funder and placing more importance on it than on the report, indicates a relationship of trust since the grantee organization opens up to a visiting funder. It can be seen as an indicator of a functioning principal-agent relationship, since the grantees themselves ask for this personal contact. It can also be seen as an indicator of different preferences of reporting, since formal M&E tools can carry the possibility of becoming highly bureaucratic, which might not be the most suitable for grantees at grassroots level.

6.9 Grantee's Feelings towards Reporting

Reporting Achievements

"I feel so good especially if I know I achieved this because of them then I report back to them and I feel so good" (G4). Reporting achievements is generally a positive aspect of reporting. Therefore, it is not surprising that the grantees felt good about reporting their achievements. What is interesting is that some of them (G4, G2, G1), as in the quote above, see the WHEAT Trust as being part of their achievement and they state that they could do it because of the WHEAT Trust, which brings the relationship into the discussion again. What also stood out is that two of the new grantees said it made them proud when they had everything to prove that they used the money accordingly (G1, G6). Hence, reporting and accounting for the money successfully can be perceived as a rewarding experience for grantees.

Reporting Challenges

Reporting challenges truthfully is a challenge in itself. If an agent should report to a principal who provides the agent with resources, the challenge can become even more complex.

Unlike reporting achievements, the opinions on reporting challenges varied between the grantees. Some grantees see challenges as part of the process because nothing comes without problems, instead challenges can be used as a source for learning and growth (G2, G3). Other grantees do not feel so comfortable reporting challenges because they do not want people to pity them or the organization, and they rather try to find solutions themselves (G6, G9). Both of those grantees also stated that they see it as one of their shortcomings that they do not like to ask for help and that they feel like they need to improve in asking for and accepting support. A contrasting opinion was stated by another grantee who would like to report challenges but then wants the WHEAT Trust to respond to it and do something about it (G8). Respondent G4 states that when she reports challenges she feels like she is complaining, but she still feels that she has to report it even though she knows that WHEAT sometimes cannot help, e.g. with the payment of salaries. But at the same time through knowing what the problems in the field are, the WHEAT Trust will know about the needs of the grantees (G4, G2). Another grantee seemed to find it difficult to report challenges but she said that she tells herself that WHEAT must know about what is happening in the project and she as the founder of the organization is responsible and is the one who should answer those questions (G5). Grantee G7 finds it important to include challenges and disappointments as well, and even with challenges and disappointments it can be a success. This grantee said she does not have a problem with reporting challenges, because "WHEAT is not a stranger" (G7).

The value that is assigned to the problems and challenges within the organization, the extent to which the person in charge feels responsible for the problems, as well as the relationship to the funder are all factors that influence the manner in which challenges are reported. These factors are important to note,

especially regarding the principal-agent theory, where one of the main aims is to create an environment that fosters truthful reporting.

6.10   Reactions to M&E Outcomes

Keith-Brown et al. (2013: 15) mentioned that from the recipients' side it can be a concern that M&E outcomes are used punitively in regards to future funding. Sanctions and rewards from the principal's side are also a central issue in the principal-agent theory. Power dynamics that might already exist through the principal-agent constellation could become amplified through the use of sanctions/rewards since it means that one side holds the power to implement them. The question in this case study is if sanctions or rewards are used as a response to M&E outcomes and how that affects M&E practice. However, sanctions and rewards are not the only things that should be identified, but also how the WHEAT Trust reacts to M&E outcomes in general.

From the grantees' side, there were some differences in the answers on how the WHEAT Trust reacts to M&E outcomes. Some grantees mentioned that there was no response after the report was handed in (G8, G6, G4, G1). Only one grantee expressed explicitly that they would have liked to receive feedback, especially as a new grantee that does not have a close relationship with the funder but considers applying for future grants (G1). Other grantees stated that they received immediate feedback after sending in the report (G9), that WHEAT motivated the grantee (G5), was supportive (G3) or that WHEAT complemented, encouraged and was always happy for their achievements (G2).

A staff member mentioned that depending on what is written in the report, WHEAT tries to support the grantee through another grant or by networking and referring them to other organizations (S3). They also have a rapid response fund in place, which is an immediate response to a monitoring outcome, if a grantee is unexpectedly in need of a grant, e.g. in case of an emergency (S2, G9).

Since the grants are quite small, the basic grant of 5,000 Rand is seen as an "unsecured risk" (S1). Part of the grant-making model is to see through the basic

grants how grantees handle the money. If a grantee does well but does not account for it, they become "disappointed" (S1), if a grantee does not perform well and does not account for it, it currently gets written off as a financial loss. According to respondent S1, the WHEAT Trust has not been able to respond to that situation, but it also has not happened often in the past few years.

Sanctions and rewards are more concrete than reactions. According to the respondents, there is no direct sanction on M&E outcomes reported by the grantees. The only case in which negative consequences follow is for a grantee not to hand in a report and not accounting for the money. The consequence is that a grantee then does not qualify for another grant (G7, G5, S4, S1). Consequently, the possibility of re-granting could then be seen as a reward for reporting back (G7, S4, S1). When grantees re-apply, WHEAT looks back on how they did with the last grant, and if they worked well with a small amount, they paved their way for a larger amount. Therefore, re-granting becomes an integral part of the WHEAT Trust's M&E approach. Additionally, the WHEAT Trust tells other donors about a grantee that does very well, and therefore networking can also be seen as a reward (S1).

Overall, it seems that the WHEAT Trust does not have a strict sanction/reward system, which might be connected to not setting specific indicators for the grantees and focusing more on the process of their work and the specifics of the niche target group they work with.

6.11   Challenges and Advantages

There were some central challenges mentioned which the WHEAT Trust faces in carrying out M&E.

Donors' Influence

A staff member pointed out that M&E is an end-thought for many of WHEAT's donors, as it was also mentioned in the literature (Batliwala and Pittman 2010: 15). Furthermore, the respondent claims that many donors view it top-down and if

they apply their corporate or international standards, "it is going to look like we are failing" (S5). This statement again calls attention to who decides what is assessed through M&E and even more so to expectations of performance.

One staff member brought attention to the fact that specific donors want their money to go towards specific thematic areas and the WHEAT Trust has to report to that donor according to that donor's M&E framework (S1, S4). Therefore WHEAT has to do two M&Es; the donor's and their own (S1).These statements indicate that in M&E practice at a grassroots women's fund, top-down meets bottom-up, principals meet agents, which immanently carries the risk for challenges and a clash of approaches.

Further research should be conducted in order to get a better impression on how M&E is seen from the donors' side, which would have exceeded the capacities of this thesis since a broad spectrum of donors has to be considered.

Limited Resources

One of the main challenges is that the WHEAT Trust is based in Cape Town while granting throughout the country (S1, S2, S3, S4). This was seen especially as a disadvantage regarding site visits (G9, S1-4), which were pointed out as a very valuable M&E method by staff members and more so by grantees. In addition to the location, limited resources in staff and finances limit the opportunities to conduct site visits across the country. According to respondent S4, it is problematic that currently there is no consistency in doing site visits since it is always different interns or staff members that go on site visits.

What was also mentioned as a challenge and is also about consistency was that if the staff member who mainly does the M&E through phone calls is not at the office, the informal part of M&E becomes difficult (S2).

Limited resources do not only affect WHEAT but also the grantees. Two grantees mentioned they faced the challenge of writing the report alone without any available help from within their organization (G1, G5).

Reports

In terms of reports, one of the challenges is that some grantees do not hand in their reports on time (S5, S4, S3). Staff members see the reasons for this in the conditions their grantees live in, e.g. grantees in rural areas might not have access to the internet, and therefore they have to be creative in terms of M&E tools and how to access their grantees (S4, S5). The current M&E approach is mainly based on reports but one respondent sees the need for more face-to-face interaction for it to be more conclusive (S4).

M&E System

Another challenge that affects the approach are internal reasons within the organization, such as that there was no proper hand-over from previous employees and the M&E approach had to be newly developed since 2012 (S4, S1). This implies that the approach has not been finalized yet and M&E as such has to be explored more on what is suitable for WHEAT's specific target group (S4). Another staff member mentioned that the M&E approach is informed by certain values but it is not documented (S1). The nature of M&E carries the risk of making it a bureaucratic process (S1). Additionally, a respondent claimed that it is difficult to assess the ripple effect that a grant can have. Grantees might not be able to express themselves accurately or cannot fully grasp what an effect their project has in their community (S4).

One respondent stated the need for formalizing the approach in terms of writing it up like a toolkit that can be shared with other funders and refers to questions such as how to measure impact on grassroots level, and in what way is it different to work with grassroots organizations than with well-established groups (S4). This statement indicates that there is lack of formalization of the M&E approach so far. As a reason for it that was mentioned by staff members is the lack of resources, such as time and specialized staff. This was also mentioned as a challenge by Keith-Brown et al. (2013: 26). The fact that the WHEAT Trust does not use any specific, 'official' M&E method such as the logical framework for example, might indicate the lack of suitable methods as stated by Batliwala and

Pittman (2010) and Keith-Brown et al. (2013), which can make it difficult for a small organization like the WHEAT Trust to formalize the way they conduct M&E.

Apart from the challenges, several advantages in the current M&E practice were mentioned.

Reports and Assistance

From the grantees' side it was mentioned that the report template is grantee-friendly (G9). It was appreciated that the WHEAT Trust acknowledges that some grantees are not well educated and hence do not care about spelling mistakes (G5). Furthermore, this respondent stated that WHEAT provides them with assistance, and she finds the template helpful to structure her report (G5). Another grantee described the template as "not too difficult", although she prefers to go to the office to fill it in with the help of a staff member (G2). The selection of grantees probably influenced the answers on the topic of the report, since they all speak English, even if not as their first language, which is a resource that other grantees do not have. Also, the help that some of these grantees mentioned could be primarily available to the ones close to the WHEAT Trust. The ones located far away can only make use of assistance through emails and phone calls.

Constant Communication and the Informal Level

Constant interaction and communication through phone calls was highlighted by all the staff members (S1-S5). According to respondent S2 staying in contact with grantees throughout the grant process makes the WHEAT Trust visible and approachable to the grantees, and therefore the respondent assumes that they feel like they can report positive things as well as challenges and do not hesitate to call (S2). Another internal resource of the WHEAT Trust is that one staff member speaks several native languages of the grantees, which is a crucial asset to fully understand them language wise but also in their experiences (S1). Another

respondent claimed that, although it is not written up, the informal level of M&E is one of the WHEAT Trust's major strengths (S1).

Flexibility, Simplicity and Support

Flexibility and simplicity of the current M&E tools are seen as an advantage in WHEAT Trust's M&E approach (S4). Through the systems that are in place, fraudulent grantees could be identified in the past (S4). If it shows through M&E that a grantee is struggling, the WHEAT Trust can offer technical support, which is also part of WHEAT's work. The main goal of M&E is not to determine whether a grantee failed or not, but to support them (S5).

6.12   Wishes for Change in M&E

To complete the picture, grantees as well as staff members were asked what they would like to change about the WHEAT Trust's M&E if they could change anything.

From the grantees' side there was the wish for more interaction between WHEAT and grantees in terms of them coming out to the projects and getting an impression of what a day looks like in the life of that organization (G9). Furthermore, it was suggested that educating grantees on how to report would be useful, either through WHEAT themselves or through other grantees (G9). One grantee simply said her wish is "no paperwork" (G2). The others claimed they cannot think of anything they would change.

From the side of the staff two respondents said they would like to educate donors on how WHEAT does M&E with their specific target group, and on how they view impact (S5, S4). The necessity for more face-to-face interaction was identified (S4), and that the systems that are already in place should be more consistent, e.g. there should be more consistency in conducting site visits. Generally, the wish for more money for site visits was mentioned multiple times, especially for visiting grantees in other provinces more regularly and for a longer period of time (S4, S3 and S1). One staff member argued that existing systems

such as convenings should be used more strategically to acquire information from grantees (S3). Furthermore, the wish to employ an M&E officer was mentioned (S4).

An explicit suggestion for a change in M&E was a smartphone campaign, which the WHEAT Trust is currently planning. The idea is that people donate smartphones and grantees get a 'package deal' of grant and smartphone. They can use the smartphone to take pictures of their organization, what they do and instantly send it to WHEAT. They can also use it to write short reports to the WHEAT Trust or just to stay in contact with them. Therefore, smartphones shall be used as M&E tools to stay in touch with grantees on a more informal level (S4).

One staff member stated that the current M&E approach should be strengthened in the way that it is, and additionally build the informal way of M&E into the current approach (S1). Her wish was to know all the grantees as well as they know the ones that are based close by. The respondent wants to systematically collect experiences of grantees about what worked, what did not work, what are challenges for grassroots women's organizations in South Africa. So far they have a bird's-eye view on their grantees across the country, but she wants to "zoom in" so that *"if anybody wanted to know what are grassroots women doing in South Africa, then you could TELL them"* (S1).

7. Concluding Discussion

The aim of this case study was to shed light on the challenges and opportunities in the M&E practice at a women's trust that supports grassroots women's organizations. It soon became clear that it is a complex issue and that many factors have to be considered when answering this question. The practical relevance of this topic is precisely pointed out by Arutyunova and Clark (2013: 45):

> Without this process of learning – which requires a considerable degree of humility and respect for those who have been advancing this work, in many cases through sustained struggles for much longer - there is a real risk that 'investing in women and girls' will soon be deemed a 'failed strategy' and consigned to history.

This statement shows that the discussion outlined in this thesis is not only a theoretical one, but in practice it has far-reaching consequences for women's organizations. Although donors are investing more in women and girls than ever before (Gill 2009: 25), this trend cannot be taken for granted, based on the argument above. Therefore, M&E is a crucial topic especially in regards to how the work of grassroots women is perceived, recognized and communicated.

On the one hand there is the issue about multiple stakeholders being involved, such as donors, the trust itself and the grantees. The relationships and critical dynamics that can occur were illustrated through a combination of principal-agent theory and Kabeer's (1999) women empowerment framework. It is argued that the principal-agent constellation and theory is a central issue in this topic because it captures the power dynamics and challenges that can occur between the different stakeholders involved. In this case study the relationship between the WHEAT Trust and most of the grantees interviewed seems to be rather close and non-hierarchical, also described as more of a *partnership* by the respondents. As mentioned before, the selection of Cape Town-based grantees could influence the experiences and no claims can be made for all grantees in general. However, on both sides, a close relationship was considered desirable and necessary for a

functioning partnership. Not only is this important for evening out hierarchical power structures that can shape a principal-agent relationship, but it also influences M&E practice in terms of the extent to which grantees feel that they can be honest when reporting. It encompasses a non-judgmental attitude from WHEAT's side towards the grantees' work.

The issue of judgment leads to the question of what is seen as (un)successful by whom, which immanently influences what is assessed through M&E and who is in a decision-making position about which values and goals are considered important. The grantees mentioned many different values and goals, which demonstrate how broad the spectrum within only nine grantees can already be. At the same time it implies that M&E has to be flexible in capturing this variety. The staff members' main value and goal was empowerment; it being a means and a goal at the same time. In this case the values and goals stated by the two main groups of stakeholders did not imply a conflicting interest. The grantees' responses to success were mostly related to establishing a functioning organization, whereas the staff members' focus was on the grantees being conscious and active agents of their individual situations. The most crucial point mentioned by staff members is that grassroots women as the agents have to be the ones that set their own values and goals according to which M&E takes place. As stated in the literature, it has to be ensured that the topics of investigation are relevant to – and owned by – the agents themselves (Kabeer 1999; Moser 2007).

As previous research suggests, there is a lack of appropriate M&E tools for women's organizations and women's funds, which seems to become amplified for the WHEAT Trust through their niche target group. Their current M&E approach includes grant reports, site visits, telephonic follow-ups as well as informal interactions and observations. Re-granting is an integral part of WHEAT's M&E approach. Although WHEAT's work is informed by Moser's (1989) gender needs approach as a feminist grant-maker, their M&E is not based on any formal M&E framework. It can be asked if that is even necessary, and I would argue that this question is justified in the case of the WHEAT Trust and grassroots development in general. This is meant in the sense that complex frameworks do not necessarily

capture what is important to the grantees or the WHEAT Trust; any type of measurement might not necessarily be useful in their context.

The discussion on indicators resulting from the previous argument is not conclusive but it appears that especially on grassroots level, it seems more important that M&E tools are flexible. This is due to the fact that a trust supports a broad variety of women's organizations and various factors in the grantees' working environment can be unstable. According to the respondents in this case study, more attention and legitimacy should thus be placed on informal methods and flexible tools than to decide on a fixed set of indicators that track progress. From the perspective of the staff members it is seen as important to assess the grantees' work based on the goals they set for themselves. Furthermore, it is stated as vital to conduct and document systematically what was found through informal methods, so that it can be collected, disseminated and used.

The examples of donor report templates, especially the two templates of CSI donors, exemplified that the ideas about how to assess grantees' work can be very different. The principal-agent problem becomes clear yet again. Principals are looking at agent's work, but principals' approaches on this matter can be different and in the constellation of this case study create challenges. The examples illustrated what staff members also mentioned in the interviews about donors' focus on facts and impact. The question of the larger women's fund if policies or legislations have emerged as a result was also mentioned by one of the staff members as unfitting for WHEAT's target group. What was positive in the two CSI template examples was that in one of them was explicitly highlighted that there are no sanctions for failing, and in the other one there was the opportunity to give feedback on the corporate company as a donor.

At present it appears that staff members as well as grantees see the grant report as a necessary and justified tool for accountability. Although not based on any particular framework, the questions seem to cover the process of the grant implementation appropriately for grantees and staff members and are also perceived as helpful for the grantees to reflect on their work. At the same time, both sides highlighted the importance of personal contact, through site visits for

example. From the staff members' side the need to better incorporate informal methods and systematically document the results was also emphasized.

Hence, it looms that an alternative M&E model would be more appropriate for the particular case of the WHEAT Trust. This approach should not mainly rely on written reports, which are still important for the aspect of accountability, but capture work on grassroots level in a less formal way and which is more accessible to the agents in the field. The cell phone campaign that was mentioned by one of the staff members could be part of such a model. What seems important is that the focus of attention moves from indicators to tracking positive and negative change, especially in the work around women's issues where the circumstances are complex, change happens slowly and includes backlashes.

Now it could be criticized that M&E should not be conducted too individualistically, with too much focus on the personal experiences of the agents. This argument was already brought up in the 1980s by Anthony Giddens (1984) in his structuration theory. He suggests capturing the link and interaction between structure and agent because it is in the meeting between society and individual that practice is implemented, that change emerges, or the status quo is maintained (Jönsson et al. 2012: 66; Gauntlett 2002: 93; King 2010). For M&E it means that these links and interactions need to be captured in order to see if, where and how change takes place. However, it does not take away the value of individual experiences of agents, which is seen as a valuable source for understanding complex issues through conscientization. Giddens argues:

> All human beings are knowledgeable agents. That is to say, all social actors know a great deal about the conditions and consequences of what they do in their day-to-day lives. (…) Knowledgeability embedded in practical consciousness exhibits an extraordinary complexity – a complexity that often remains completely unexplored in orthodox sociological approaches, especially those associated with objectivism (Giddens 1984: 281).

He further argues that day-to-day life has to be understood as an interpretation of social and system integration (ibid: 282). This means that especially in the context

of women empowerment and gender equality, the circumstances are complex and shaped by many factors such as power relations, intersectionality, cultural and societal values and norms. In this field it can be especially difficult to capture change holistically.

Discussing M&E as a way of looking at development initiatives and considering the continuous questions of how to do it and what to assess, I argue that there is a risk of viewing the agents in an instrumental way. The theoretical research that I conducted on M&E sometimes felt like a bureaucratic, theoretical process, detached from every-day practice. And yet, conducting interviews with these grantees, I was sitting in some of the women's living rooms because that is where they operate from. There seems to be a gap between theory and practice as well as between the different understandings of how to do M&E in this specific context of grassroots development. What I want to say is that especially in the context of grassroots development and women empowerment, it seems crucial that M&E is not detached from the grassroots, from individual experiences, since it is a valuable source of experience and knowledge. However, drawing on Giddens' argument above, it is necessary to see and capture this link between agent and structure through appropriate M&E approaches. It is a challenge, especially in the context of this case study, where cause-effect logic does not do justice to the 'messy reality', as Batliwala and Pittman (2010: 15) call it.

The current critique on results- and impact-based M&E methods, as well as the position where staff members locate the WHEAT Trust, can be seen as an opportunity to speak up against the currently predominant way of conducting M&E and promoting one that is better suited for grassroots women's organizations. The WHEAT Trust works directly with grassroots women's organizations and inherits an intermediate position between donors and grassroots, being both a principal and an agent. They see their opportunity in strengthening their current approach and promoting it as an alternative way of doing M&E on grassroots level.

This study was intended to shed light on the particular case of the WHEAT Trust as a feminist grant-maker and its grantees that are based at the grassroots

level, highlighting their position, their challenges and their opportunities in the current discussion on M&E. To acquire a more conclusive picture of grantees' opinions and experiences, further research should be conducted with grantees in the other South African provinces to broaden the spectrum of grantees reached and represented. Additionally, it would be interesting to conduct research with other grant-makers whose grantees are based at grassroots level and/or work on women's issues. This study can be used by the WHEAT Trust as a baseline for continuous research and strengthening of their M&E approach. It can also be useful for other actors, such as donors and other women's funds and organizations to get an insight into the experiences of M&E within a grassroots women's fund. Hopefully it contributes as an alternative viewpoint to a broader discussion on the effectiveness of development initiatives, efficiency, impact, results and progress, which are terms that currently shape definitions and discussions about M&E.

Giddens (1984: 283) states that power is one of several primary concepts of social science, all clustered around the relations of action and structure. The WHEAT Trust and its grantees stand between power and empowerment, which makes learning from their experience a truly valuable endeavor. Located at the link between structure and individual, between principal and agent, between corporations and grassroots, their experience contributes to a variety of aspects within development discourse and practice.

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Appendix I – Interview Guides

WHEAT Staff

Introductory Questions

1. Could you please briefly describe your role in the organization?

2. Please describe what a successful grantee is to you.

   Please describe what an unsuccessful grantee is to you.

Question about Tools and Frameworks

3. What is WHEAT's current M&E approach?

Question about WHEAT's Principles and Values

4. What is WHEAT's mission and vision? In what way is it visible/included in the M&E?

Question about Influences

5. Who or what influences your M&E practice? How?

Questions on Sanctions/Rewards

6. How do you respond or react to M&E outcomes, good or bad?

7. How do you track negative changes and backlashes?

Question on WHEAT's Added Value

8. What do you think is WHEAT's advantage/disadvantage compared to other funders?

9. In your opinion, what works well in WHEAT's M&E?

Question on Challenges and Limitations

10. What challenges do you see and experience in WHEAT's M&E?

Final Open Questions

11. What would you like to change about M&E if you could?

12. Why do you do M&E?

Is there anything you would like to add?

Grantees

Introductory Questions

1. Could you please briefly describe your role in the organization/project?
2. How many grants has your organization received from WHEAT?

Questions about Values and Goals

3. What do you want to accomplish/change with your work?
4. Please describe what a successful grantee is to you.
   Please describe what an unsuccessful grantee is to you.

Questions about WHEAT's M&E

5. How/in what ways do you report back to WHEAT on how you used the grant and on your work in general?
6. What do you think about the grant reports that you fill out for WHEAT?
7. How do you feel about reporting your achievements to WHEAT?
8. How to you feel about reporting challenges and problems that your organization faces?

Sanctions/Rewards

9. In what way does WHEAT respond/react to what you report?

Relationship between WHEAT and Grantee

10. How would you describe your relationship to WHEAT?
11. What do you think is WHEAT's advantage/disadvantage compared to other funders?

Final Open Question

12. What would you like to change about WHEAT's M&E if you could?

Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix II – Interview Protocol Template

Interview (name)
_____
Protocol

a) How was the interview arranged? What were the arrangements?

b) What circumstances/conditions stuck out? (building, welcoming, interactions, etc.)

c) What were the conditions? (time, duration, room, people)

d) How did the conversation go? (dynamics, behavior, feelings)?

e) Which effects could the situation of the interview have had on the responses?

f) What happened before or after the 'official' interview (recorded)? (reception, farewell, what was talked about off-records?

g) What are my assumptions about the interview?

- Meaning of the interview for the interviewee

- Potential effects of the arrangement of the interview on the conversation

- Specifically interesting/careful passages to be interpreted

- Conclusions from the interview context about the system being researched

Appendix III – Email to Grantees

Dear (name),

I am a student from Germany, I was an intern at WHEAT and currently I am writing my master's thesis at the end of my studies. My research topic is the WHEAT Trust's monitoring and evaluation approach, which means that I would like to know how WHEAT "measures" impact and change that is achieved through the work of the grantees. Part of this research is that I would like to know what grantees think and how they feel for example about the grant reports that they have to fill out, and what they define as positive change in their work.

Therefore I would like to ask nine different grantees about their opinions, one of them is you.

I hope you agree to participate in my study. It is important to mention that it is completely anonymous, no one will know (except me) who said what. It has no implication for future funding or influences your relationship with WHEAT. It is merely for the purpose of learning from your experience.

The interview would take place sometime in the next two weeks, latest in 3 weeks. If it is okay for you, I would like to visit you so that we can have a nice and private conversation.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you can and would like to participate. It will be highly appreciated! I won't take too much of your time, it will probably only take 30 minutes to 1 hour.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,
Annika

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Appendix IV – Information Sheet for the Interviewee

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Information Sheet for the Interviewee

Hereby I would like to inform you about my research, for which I would like to interview you. Data protection requires your expressed and informed consent that I am allowed to save and later analyze our interview.

My master thesis is about the monitoring and evaluation approach at the *Women's Hope Education and Training (WHEAT) Trust* in Cape Town, South Africa. Therefore various experts will be interviewed (WHEAT staff members, grantees).

I am committed to confidentiality and data secrecy. The thesis is done solely for scientific purposes. Throughout the process, I follow the proper procedures so that your information may not be related to your person:

- I deal with information carefully: I record the conversation on tape. The tape is going to be erased after the analysis.
- I anonymize i.e. change all the interviewees' names in the analysis and in the thesis.
- Your name and phone number will be deleted from my files after the interview, so that there is only the anonymized transcript. The signed consent form is kept in a separate folder which is only accessible by me. It is merely for me to be able to confirm that you agree with the analysis. The consent form cannot be tied to your interview.
- The anonymous transcript will not be published. It will be read by the corrector of my master thesis, who is also subject to confidentiality. Quotes will be used in the thesis, but it won't be recognizable from which interviewee they originate.

It is also to be pointed out explicitly that no disadvantages arise from non-participation. Furthermore, you can refuse to answer individual questions. The consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time.

If you would like a copy of my thesis, I will certainly send you one once it is finished.

Thank you for your kind support.

Appendix V – Consent Form

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-Consent Form-

I have been informed about the process of the interview (including anonymization in the transcript, deletion of the tape, erasure of name and phone number, and storage of the consent form).

I agree that some sentences (that cannot be brought in connection with my person) can be used as material for the scientific purpose of the master thesis.

Under these conditions, I am willing to participate in the interview and I agree that it will be recorded, transcribed, anonymized and analyzed.

Place, date _____

Signature _____
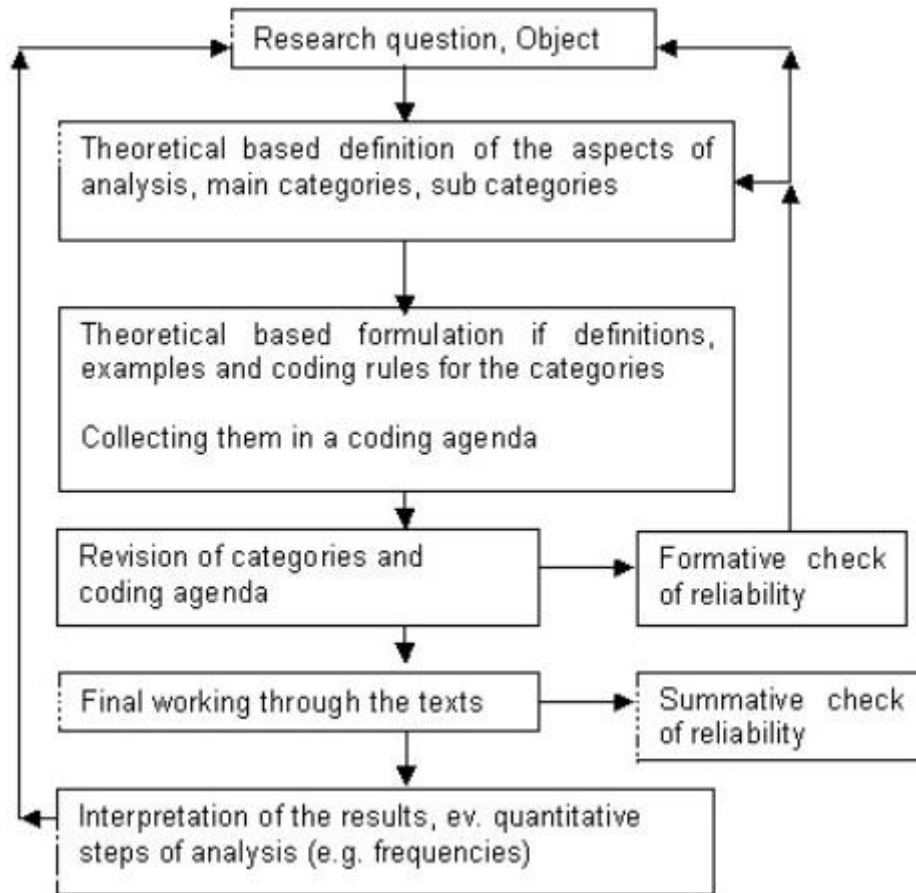
Appendix VI – Coding Agenda

Category	Sub-category	Coding rule	Example
Values and goals			
	Grantees' values and goals	Respondent mentions explicitly or implicitly values and/or goals	*So I said yoh this one keeps me very busy but because I decided that I want to do it because I needed change. (I: Yah.) And I WAS being abused also (I: Oh.) and that is why I decided that. I KNOW how does it feel to be abused and then I said to me I MUST teach the other ladies that they mustn't keep quiet. They must stand up for their rights because I think that it is also a human right. You are women so it is also your right. (G4)*
	WHEAT's values and goals	Respondent mentions explicitly or implicitly values and/or goals	*WHEAT's vision is to sustain these women, these women's organizations, up until a level where they can just do their work on their own. We don't have to walk hands in hands with them. They can just walk alone. (S3)*
Funder-grantee relationship		Respondent talks directly or indirectly about the relationship with the other stakeholder	*Yah they are my bosses but. (pause) I know that form like (pause) in my language, in our language, which is Xhosa, they say ((something in Xhosa)) so it means that the knowledge you don't have, you should ask those ones that have. (I: Oooh) So I'm just- with them I'm like that. (I: Mhm) So I know that, yah I'm proud with them. (G5)*
Perceptions of success		Respondent gives their general opinion about their understanding of success	*I think success is measured in different ways. Erm and I think the group of grantee, the group of grantees that we work with, erm and how funders want us to measure success is- and we are challenging people in terms of how we want to measure success. (S4)*
	Successful	Respondent gives their opinion on what a successful grantee is to them	*And for me a successful grantee would be a grantee that comes up. And come to the organization without any money and say 'I have this brilliant idea'. (I: Mhm.) And I can already see where it's playing out and what it is going to do for the community. And they only need a small amount of money for that. That is success. (S4)*
	Unsuccessful	Respondent gives their opinion on what an unsuccessful	*And also I think an unsuccessful grantee is someone who doesn't meet the needs of the community. That means you ask for funds that are not needed in that community. (G3)*

		grantee is to them	
Reasons for doing M&E		Respondent gives their opinion on why M&E is carried out	*I think it's important and I think it keeps us addressed of what's happening out there, it keeps our ear on the ground. I think the M&E informs our work, it also measures, it's also nice to hear what's happening when you do your work and what the impact. And I think the beautiful thing is that sometimes you don't have control over what that 5000 Rand meant to that organization. But it has such a ripple effect. (S4)*
Current M&E Approach		Respondent gives a general comment on the current M&E approach at the WHEAT Trust	*Ja, I would say our monitoring and evaluation system works from before we give the grant, till after the three months of the grant cycle. (S2)*
	Framework	Respondent mentions frameworks that WHEAT's work and/or M&E are based on	*For me it's rather to see what are the OPPORTUNITIES to have a an organization that almost act at a practical gender needs level, what are the opportunities for THEM to start identifying strategic gender needs. (S1)*
	Indicators	Respondent indicates specific indicators related to M&E or gives their opinion on indicators in general	*And we always say and we are very critical sometimes and we say that (pause) funders need to learn how WE do M&E, we don't have to ADAPT to how they want M&E. Because many funders say how many policies have you changed. And we say no, our grantees are FAR from there. It's not about how many policies. So they must change their templates about how, how they want us to measure success. We don't have to learn HOW they want us to measure success. They have to learn from US. (S4)*
	M&E tools and formal methods	Respondent mentions M&E tools and formal methods and/or comments on such	*So formally I think it's really just that report to us on how do you spend the money and also what happened within the organization while you implement the grant. (S1)*
	Informal Methods	Respondent mentions informal methods and/or comments on such	*We do send emails and faxes, but I think it's more effective when you have a sort of a conversation with them (I: Mhm.) and sometimes the tone of their voice can also erm, give you sort of a ((impression)) to where the grantees are at. You know? (S2)*
	Advantages	Respondent names advantages in the	*But I used to ask some interns, erm to help me (I: Okay.) Before I send my.*

		current M&E practice, directly or indirectly	*According like my English is not properly like from writing skills and stuff. I know that WHEAT doesn't care. About your your ((busters)) and what what. (laughs) It's no, they can understand what you are trying to say.*
	Challenges	Respondent names directly or indirectly challenges in the current M&E practice	*It varies from donor to donor, erm for example donors that give once off amounts, it's very difficult because sometimes (pause) their reporting is sort of an end-thought. Erm (I: Mhm.) so it's a thing of okay, we've given you the money and you've spent it and a year later they go oh by the way, we would like a report on that. (S5)*
	Grantees' perceptions of M&E	Respondent expresses in what ways they report back to WHEAT on their work	*They have got a report erm form that they give, where you yah. You fill it in and give all the breakdown of how you have used the money. (G8)*
Grantees' feelings towards reporting		Respondent expresses their opinion on reporting to WHEAT	*I don't see any problem. And even whatever question they ask I don't have a problem because it's what they want to know. (G4)*
	Reporting Achievements	Respondent expresses how they feel about reporting achievements to WHEAT	*(pause) That makes me feel excellent, that makes me feel that they are part of what I'm doing, and it's all thanks to you that I could do this. (I: Ja.) So I feel GOOD. Going back and know that this thing that I did was a success. (G2)*
	Reporting Challenges	Respondent expresses how they feel about reporting challenges to WHEAT	*I don't know what can I say about that. (laughs) (I: (laughs)) But they must know. And then I just tell myself that I MUST tell them what is going on. (I: Mhm.) They must know what I'm on. (I: Ja.) Because the (pause) since me I'm the one not going up and down. I'm always in, in the project. Of which now everything is on my head. (I: Ja.) I feel it. And then I get that. So they must know what is the (pause) environment and stuff, what is happening in the project. (G5)*
Challenges for grantees in M&E		Respondent mentions explicitly or implicitly what challenges they face with WHEAT's M&E	*Reporting back it was a challenge because as we are working as a team in ((name of the project)) the challenge that I had with reporting back is that I had to do this alone and write it alone. (G1)*
Influences on M&E practice		Respondent talks about factors that influence M&E practice	*So, in that sense we sometimes have to do two things. (I: Mhm.) We have to make sure that we also adhere to what we have to report back to the back*

			donor too, but on the other hand, if that donor does not want to re-grant it does not prevent US to re-grant a grantee. (S1)
Reactions/responses to M&E outcomes		Respondent mentions any way in which WHEAT reacts/responds to M&E outcomes	*They will always erm complement, always a nice word of encouragement, always happy. Yes. THAT I can say, always happy for YOUR achievements, really. (G2)*
	Sanctions/ Rewards	Respondent talks explicitly or implicitly about sanctions or rewards in WHEAT's M&E	*Erm and only when a grantee for example got the 5,000 Rand and worked very strategically and accounted, they kind of paved the way for themselves to access a bigger amount. (S1)*
Wishes for change in M&E		Respondent states wishes for change in M&E or what could work better, based on their experience	*If I had all the money, if I had all the time (laughs) and if I had all the capacity and in fact if any of those things were not an issue. What I would really like to change IS our ability to know all our grantees as well as we know the ones close to us. (S1)*

Appendix VII – Step Model of Deductive Category Application

Source: Mayring 2000: 109