(Dis)empowerment?

A study on the influence of discourses on gender in the lives of rural Zambian women

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Gender Studies

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Blindern, Norway
November, 2013

Acknowledgements

Dedication

Deals! Deals! Were the funny words you liked. **Deals! Deals!** Had no exact meaning but you managed to communicate to family and friends. We all managed to get the sense of what you were trying to say, when you mentioned **Deals! Deals!**

This thesis is therefore, dedicated to you my late brother Gerald Chanda Tembo. You died at the time when I was busy trying to put bits and pieces of this thesis together. Your sudden death was a blow to the entire family. I had no strength to continue writing after your death by the grace of God and consoling encouragements from friends and colleagues, I managed to pull through I cried every time I sat down alone in my office and thought of you. Many are the times when I left my office without writing anything because of your shocking death. I still think of the last call you made to me, but I did not pick it and eventually forgot to call you back. May be you could have said bye to each other, who knows? I can't believe you are no more. I do not know when my tears will dry. Your death is still a shock to me. I loved you and I still love you posthumously.

Abstract

This study focuses on discourses on gender that are disseminated by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). These discourses about gender have been contrasted with how gender is lived and experienced in rural Zambian women's daily lives. The main aim of the study is to consider what type of influence the different discourses on gender have on rural women's practices when it comes to gender roles.

The study has highlighted the experiences of rural women living in Zambia's Eastern Province. It reveals the ways in which NGOs contribute to promoting gender equality and also their strategies for reaching out to women. The study was focused on local NGOs that work with women issues in Zambia. Development and discourse theory has been used to analyse the relationship of NGO discourses on gender and the lived experience of participants. The study has also a focus on the impact of the economic status of the women in question, especially with regards to their basic needs, such as food, money and basic material possessions.

The findings of the study show that NGO discourses have both positive and negative influences on the lives of poor rural women living in the Eastern Province of Zambia. Some participants looked at the NGO discourses as disempowering women and upsetting local cultural landscape. While on the other hand, some participants felt to be very empowered by the arrival of NGOs in the midst of their socio-economic problems. The research further claims that the NGO discourses are not rightly accepted by the locals without encountering any bottlenecks in the implementation phase. Some of the NGO gender discourses have been opposed by local women because their local gender discourses have a bearing in their lives than the new and `foreign` NGO gender discourses. This situation calls for a more contextual consideration of diverse societies and may direct future research.

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List of Abbreviations

BBC   British Broadcasting Corporation

BINGO   Big International Non-governmental Organisations

CSO   Central Statistical Office

C1   Community 1

C2   Community 2

GAD   Gender and Development

HIV/AIDS   Human Ammonal Deficiency Virus or/and Acquired Immune
            Deficiency Syndrome

KJV   King James Version

NGO   Non-Governmental Organisations

ODA   Official Development Assistance

UN   United Nations

UNDP   United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO   United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

WAD   Women and Development

WCD   Women Culture and Development

WID   Women in Development

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1 Introduction

Most developing countries the world over have come to recognize the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) which are presumed to implement work that formal governments may find challenging to undertake. Zambia is no exception; it has seen an influx of both local and International NGOs that target different groups and work on a diverse range of issues. The NGOs targeting women are similarly present in Zambia to help women and girls negotiate the many challenges they face in their daily lives. This study investigates the influence of NGOs on women residing in under-served rural areas. The study focuses on the lives of women living in the Eastern Province of Zambia. It scrutinises how the gender discourses spearheaded by a number of NGOs conflict with or reflect the lived experiences of the target group or with their local traditional approaches to gender roles. In essence, the study underscores the impact of various NGO discourses on poor rural women on one hand, and the influence of dominant local discourses on the other.

1.1 Statement of the problem

In the build-up to this project, I consulted a number of studies within the field of gender and development, particularly studies grounded in feminist research. For example, Mohanty (1998) has written about western colonial discourses and the impact it has on the production of the 'Third World Woman' as a singular monolithic subject in some recent (western) feminist texts. She looks at this subject in terms of colonization but not in terms of development. My immediate impression was that most of the studies have not sufficiently investigated the impact of the types of global discourses disseminated by NGOs to people in poor communities, who live by and value their own original local discourses. Of course, some studies have touched on the daily experiences of poor women, and how they construct their lived discourse (Breidlid 2013). In this study, I have reflected on both the global discourses about gender that are disseminated through NGOs as agents, and the local discourses with local people as agents and custodians of their own cultural gender norms. These are the norms that make up what I refer to here as 'local gender discourse' and refer to conversations, spoken or written, about ideas and knowledge that are relayed in the local cultural landscape in order to understand realities (Dionigi, 2004).

In other words, I have ventured into this study with a hypothetical assumption that the targeted women who participated in this study have their own values and ideas about how they should live their lives, while simultaneously 'buying into' some NGO discourses, and rejecting others. Given this perspective, I have taken Foucault's work on discourse as my frame of reference, although it is often difficult to understand his work, because of its sometimes convoluted style and the density of references to philosophical works (Mills 2007). In principle, this study aims to explore whether and how the women participants reflect on, apply or reject the `outside` gender discourses brought to them by NGOs. The study examines how NGO and local gender discourses contradict or engage each other at different levels in the participants' ways of life.

However, a couple of challenging questions arise when this subject concerns women of low socio-economic means, living in somewhat under-served rural areas. The participants are women classified as poor, who are under-served by the State, thus, their livelihood or daily living is to a large extent sustained by their affiliation to NGOs. Due to their status, the poor women become targets for NGOs that inevitably come with their own frames of reference to `change` the affected women's lives. The `change` includes the distribution of gender roles between females and males in the context of development theory and practice. In this regard, rural communities are poor areas in the rural part of the country, with limited basic social structures and resources in comparison to some well-served urban communities.

To accomplish the objective of the study, I formulated one main research question and a number of more specific sub-questions.

1.2   Objective of the study

The objective of this study is to gain some knowledge of how rural women in Zambia's Eastern Province experience and cope with two sets of gender discourse: local discourse as determined by their own ways of living on one hand, and the `exterior` discourse brought into their lives by NGOs. The study explores the ways in which NGOs contribute to promoting gender equality by examining their strategies for reaching out to local women. The study further focuses on the impact of the economic status of the women in question, especially with regards to their basic needs, such as food and shelter

in relation to prevailing gender roles. In order to meet the objectives of this study, I framed my research questions as follows:

1.3   Main research question

What are some of the discourses on gender that shape and influence the lives and experiences of rural women living in the Eastern province of Zambia, and who are the key agents of these discourses? The question takes into consideration the socio-economic landscape of the participating women and the NGOs that provide them with various resources for sustenance.

1.3.1   Sub questions
a) How do local people in Zambia's Eastern Province define gender roles and what are their frames of reference?
b) How are gender roles defined by national and international NGOs in Zambia?
c) What role does lack of money and basic material possessions play in determining gender roles in the affected communities?
d) What is the relationship between the lived experiences of the research participants and the NGO discourses on gender?

1.4   Rationale for the study

As already alluded to, various studies within gender or/and feminist research have reported on issues related to gender discourses in developing countries, but very few have focussed on the values of the participating women. This study is an attempt to present the contextual realities and experiences of the affected women from an `insider` perspective rather than as an `outsider`.

I was born and grew up in Zambia, and through some of my own experiences, I came to understand that certain gender roles were distinctly reserved for men while others were earmarked for women. I also experienced the setting up of countless NGOs in my community that aimed to empower women and to raise their awareness on different issues, with their own agendas and frames of references. This is what actually gave me an insight into how NGOs working on women's issues operate.

Of late, there has been an increased focus on the influence of global discourses on poor women and children, especially in developing countries (Breidlid 2013). The local knowledge and original ways of living in different communities of the world are slowly being appreciated by many researchers, especially those feminist researchers who value peoples' lived experiences as part of their knowledge construction, and thereby promote a multi-cultural approach as opposed to further entrenching one global culture. Through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for example, the United Nations (UN) has led the turn towards an emphasis on cultural diversity and the appreciation of minority cultures (UNESCO 2010). De Leo (2010:4) observes that:-

> Globalisation[1] has become a threat to many cultures and languages, necessitating urgent action to stem the rapid loss of languages and cultural knowledge. Globalization has brought the values, products, practices and behaviours of other globally dominant cultures to the doorstep of almost every child on the planet, challenging family values, local practices and traditional cultures and beliefs.

In view of this, some development practitioners and academics are worried that cultural diversity is being threatened. The power of globalisation seems determined to engulf the world, by destabilise or `swallow up` less powerful local cultures, by systematically imposing standardization and hybridity (UNESCO 2010). Considering UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), which defines culture as "the spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a social group", it is therefore, alarming to observe the overwhelming pace at which globalisation and `cultural uniformity` is proceeding. Globalisation is replacing the local values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviour, customs, traditions, practices, identity, lifestyle, language and religious faith of diverse peoples with distant cultures (De Leo 2010). However, if culture has to be echoed through our everyday conversations and relationships, including how we relate as men and women, what we wear, what we eat, how we determine rules, values, ethics, views and skills, then cultural diversity and understanding ought not to be overlooked. Local culture is transmitted through the arts such as music, dance, theatre, architecture, literature and festivals which define continuity in a particular society, and any change or modification changes the direction of the culture in question. However, as visible as

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[1] Globalisation in this regard, means the distant cultures that have been brought about by the NGOs influence on the local environment. (NGO discourses).

culture may be, it may also be silent and intangible, for it forms our ways of thinking and is a filter through which we perceive the world, thus, globalisation could be viewed to be taking advantage of this perception (UNESCO 2010). What follows describes the socio-economic and geographical context of the study.

2 Contextual background

2.1 Socio-economic context: Zambia

Zambia is a landlocked[2] country and constitutes a large part of Central and Southern Africa with a total area of 752,000 square kilometres. The last official national census in 2010 estimated the population to be slightly over 13 million. Of these official figures in the 2010 census of population and housing, 49% were said to be males while 51% were females (Central Statistics Office 2013). Of the same population, about 62% live in the rural areas and 48% live in urban areas (Mwansa 2011). However, the leading urban settlements are concentrated in Lusaka and the Copperbelt provinces. There is a rail line running from the Copperbelt through Lusaka to Livingstone in the Southern Province, and it is along this rail line that development efforts, in terms of markets, services, technical undertakings, urbanised settlements and labour force, are more prominent. In the Zambian labour force, three-fifths of adult women participate in work that mostly involves agriculture and public services. Gender inequalities are of central concern and hold a place in the human development ranking of Zambia. The country ranks 144 of 157 nations in the gender-related Development Index (World Bank 2011).

However, the country has managed to attract steady inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI), reaching $1.73 billion in 2010, despite inflows falling again since then (UNDP 2013). Most of the FDI in 2010 were utilised in the mining sector as copper remains the main source of export earnings, accounting for about 65% of total exports (UNDP 2013). On the other hand, non-traditional exports are equally growing, with Zambia's external trade growing extensively since the early 1990s in response to globalization, with many more products being exported in 2013 (UNDP 2013).

HIV/AIDS prevalence has slightly declined in Zambia even though women still remain among the most vulnerable groups. The percentage of adult population aged 15–49 years who have HIV/AIDS has declined from 16% in 2001–2002 to 14 % in 2007. However, the prevalence among females is nearly 30% higher than among males. (World Bank 2011)

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[2] Zambia is one of the countries in Africa that is completely bordered by neighbouring countries with no surrounding sea. It shares a border with 8 surrounding countries, as shown in the maps in Fig 1.

Fig 1: Geographical position of Zambia in relation to other neighbouring countries

Source: Courtesy of Google Images

The 2007 Zambia Demographic and Health Survey indicated that 14% of currently married women are married to men who are in a polygamous union. Older women who live in rural areas, women with low levels of education and women with the least amount of wealth are more likely than other women to have co-wives (CSO 2013). The prevalence of polygamy varies across provinces with Lusaka Province having the lowest level of 4% and Southern Province having the highest with 25% (CSO 2013).

2.2   Social and economic status

In the last 12 years, the economic growth of Zambia has risen to more than 5% and a further 6% from 2006-11, with a fall in inflation to under 10% since 2009/2010(Ngoma 2012). Growth at this rate since Zambia gained its independence from British colonial rule is extraordinary, and counters almost three decades of unproductivity from the early 1980s. However, the available data suggest that poverty has not fallen significantly and, in any case, remains unacceptably high, probably in excess of 60% (Ngoma 2012). Despite having achieved lower middle-income status Zambia, continues to seriously lag behind in almost all human development indicators, and income inequality remains high (World Bank 2013). In addition, nearly 90% of the labour force is in the informal sector, where incomes and productivity are low (Ngoma 2012). Consequently, this reflects negatively on the poverty levels in the country as social conditions are getting tougher. Poverty is getting widespread as life expectancy is among the lowest in the

world and the death rate is one of the highest, probably due to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS (BBC 2013).

To a greater extent, the poverty levels in the country have been attributed to the inconsistent copper prices on the world market. Copper has been Zambia's main source of wealth in both the pre and post-independence times. This situation has resulted in the under-development of the country, especially in the rural parts of the country. The gross national income (GNI) stands at US $1,160 (BBC 2013)

Table 1: Zambia fact file

Full name	Republic of Zambia
Population	13.8 million (UN, 2012)
Capital	Lusaka
Area	752,614 sq. km (290,586 sq. miles)
Major language	English (official), Bemba, Lozi, Nyanja, Tonga
Major religions	Christianity, indigenous beliefs, Hinduism, Islam
Life expectancy	49 years (men), 50 years (women) (UN)
Monetary unit	1 Kwacha = 100 ngwee
Main exports	Copper, minerals, tobacco
GNI per capita	US $1,160 (World Bank, 2011)

Source: BBC 2013

The table above (Table1) presents some basic statistics about Zambia that are of interest in this study. For example, the table presents the major religions in the country and confirms that although Christianity has influence on many Zambians, traditional indigenous beliefs still hold an important place in the country. The table equally shows the poverty levels in the country by highlighting the country's GNI per capita. A high birth rate, relatively high HIV/AIDS burden, and market distorting agricultural policies have meant that Zambia's economic growth has not dramatically reduced the stubbornly

high poverty rates. A good number of the population still lives below the poverty datum line (World Bank 2013).

2.3 Tradition and culture

Zambia's contemporary culture is a blend of the values, norms, material and spiritual traditions of more than 70 ethnically diverse peoples. Most of the ethnic groups of Zambia moved into the geographical region known today as Zambia in a series of migratory waves a few centuries before being colonized by Britain (UNDP 2013). The groups grew in number and many travelled in search of establishing bigger kingdoms on fertile land and greener pastures. However, under colonial rule, the processes of industrialization and urbanization that served the economic interests of the British colonizers led to ethnically different people being brought together. This generated a new form of culture indirectly enshrined in the political policies of the colonizers (UNDP 2013).

As already alluded to above, many of the rural populations, found ways to preserve their indigenous and traditional customs and values. After independence from Britain in 1964, the Zambian government acknowledged the role culture was to play in the inclusive development of a new nation and began to explore the question of a national identity (UNDP 2013).

2.3.1 Gender within local cultures

Generally, both men and women work hard to support the family economically, but women have the extra responsibility of caring for the household. In cities, women are found to work in untraditional roles including office work, in heavy industries, and being appointed to numerous influential positions in both the public and the private sectors. However, there is a significant gap between the women in influential positions, and their counterparts in the rural areas. In the rural areas patriarchal arrangements of daily life are more visible and remain a dominant social arrangement, cutting across ethnic groups and livelihoods (Mwansa 2011, UNICEF 2009). The prevalence of

patriarchy[3] determines daily relations between men and women, with men taking advantage of women because this scenario favours them. For example, some men could have a chain of girl friends that offer sex in exchange for care and support because women have limited resources. Socio-cultural norms in Zambia generally favour men in terms of decision-making, sharing responsibilities and the general management of the family economy (Eckman 2007). This translates into the inability of women to influence and participate fully in matters that directly affect their lives. It has actually contributed to women having a very low cultural and socio-economic status in Zambia.

In rural areas, a woman's day begins with doing house chores that include sweeping the house and the compound, and fetching water, usually from far away. The washing of clothes (using bare hands) and the preparation of meals are also done by women. Looking after children is a primary responsibility of the woman of the house, although older siblings are expected to help out with these chores as men are socialising with friends, usually over a beer (Mwansa 2011). However, women are seen to be 'socialising' while they are doing the chores. HIV/AIDS has killed a very high number of men in rural areas, leaving women as sole providers for their families. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the effects of the pandemic on the families of victims (mostly men) have been catastrophic, as this has left women as sole supporters of their families, including sick children and other dependents (Mwaanga 2012, Mwansa 2011).

2.3.2   *The presence of NGOs in Zambia*

In recent years, there has been a great attempt to increase women's rights in Zambia. However, it has proved difficult to incorporate programmes that change traditional beliefs. For example, a man who wants to marry has to pay a dowry in the form of money or livestock to the family of the girl or woman he wants to marry (Scott 2006). The dowry is considered compensation to the family for the lost services of the girl or woman. It is such practices that some NGOs view to be negative, thus, implementing programmes meant to change them for the `better`. NGOs are in different sectors and most of them have women and children on their respective agendas. Top of the list of NGOs in Zambia are the micro-finance NGOs that try to empower women economically. The idea behind these NGOs is to enable women to make some economic

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[3] ...This term was originally used to describe social systems based on authority of male heads of household (Scott & Marshall 2005:482)

gain and eventually strengthen their voice within the family's economic administration, which is generally characterized by widespread gender-based inequality and discrimination against women (United Nations 2012).

Traditionally and for a long time, the Zambian education system was to the advantage of boys over girls. There are various reasons contributing to this situation. One practical example is that in some areas schools were (and still are) in distant places where girls would find it difficult and dangerous to walk because of fear of rape or attackers. This is also coupled with a cultural belief in some families that it is better to educate a boy child because a girl will get married and be 'taken over' by her husband and his family, Consequently, girls have hardly benefitted from any classroom room education in most of the country. The literacy rate among females aged 15 and above is 61% as fewer girls get enrolled in secondary schools, with a ratio of male to female secondary enrolment of 83% (World Bank 2011). As a result, NGOs that are trying to fill the gap between men and women's social and economic status have taken centre stage.

2.4   The Eastern Province of Zambia

The Eastern Province in Zambia is one of 10 provinces in the country and shares borders with Malawi and Mozambique. Most of it is rural with pockets of urbanisation, especially in the administrative centres of the districts. The province is divided into eight districts, of which Chipata is the biggest and hosts the provincial administration. Eastern Province of Zambia has a population of 1,707,731 according to the 2010 national census, of which 49.4% are male and 50.6% are female (CSO 2011). Eastern Province has an average annual population growth rate of 2.6% (CSO 2011). This has translated into the establishment of different communities with varying socio-economic statuses. There are typical rural villages on one hand, and somewhat urbanised communities on the other. However, within the urbanised communities there are also slum areas that host poor families who usually work for the people in the affluent communities, especially those of Asian descent that have been settled in Zambia for many years.

There is overwhelming evidence that poverty in Eastern Province has become a social and economic crisis of huge proportions, denying the majority of people a decent

standard of living. Hunger, sickness and disease, including HIV/AIDS, are claiming more lives (Civil Society for Poverty Reduction, Zambia 2013). At another level, historical, geographical and social factors are the root causes of extreme rural poverty in many parts of Zambia. Some parts of the country have no proper networks such as, road or railway lines, which limits access to services, markets, technical knowledge and productive assets. The occurrence of rural poverty is worst in regions that are far from the rail line; Eastern Province is one such region.

2.5 The community involved in the study

The community in which the participants in this study live is one of the slums of Chipata, the administrative hub of the Eastern Province. It is actually a stone's throw away from the central business district of Chipata, but remains one of the poorest communities in the country. What characterizes this community is unemployment among the residents, and lack of development progress on the part of the government. The few opportunities, in form of work, which can be found, are filled by men, leaving women in the community extremely vulnerable to the economic situation. Agricultural productivity as an option in this community is held back by lack of access to input and services, as well as to transport, markets and other social infrastructure that would support it. However, the situation is somewhat cushioned by the presence of NGOs that are on the ground to try and uplift the living standards of women and children.

The remainder of the thesis is divided into 3 chapters that discuss the methodological approach used in the study and the theoretical perspectives that inform the analysis of the research findings. The thesis closes with a conclusion that summarizes the central arguments and suggestions made in the thesis.

3   Methodology

3.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the methods applied during fieldwork. The thesis explores how the discourses on gender transmitted by Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) have influenced the lives of rural women in the Eastern Province of Zambia. This was a qualitative study in which interviews were used to collect data.

Women in rural Zambia have long been seen to be lacking recognition in society. They have been associated to the kitchen and the doing of house chores. Men in Zambia seem to have much power over women, they get most of the education, have good jobs and great control over women. Most of the NGOs claim to improve the livelihood of women by providing them with the knowledge and skills which may be useful in their lives.

Women in rural Zambia are perceived to be vulnerable individuals who require assistance to get out of their vulnerable situation. It is for this reason that a feminist methodological approach was used in this study, in order to understand women's social positioning. There are many characteristics of feminist methodology. I outline some of them below.

3.2   Feminists approaches to methodology

Feminist methodology can be identified by its unique characteristics: Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002:10) claim that "feminist methodology is one set of approaches to the problems of producing justifiable knowledge of gender relations"

Feminists have highlighted many challenges regarding how traditional ways of researching have analysed women and their social lives. Women were not considered to possess knowledge. Hesse Biber et al (2004:3) state that "Feminists employ a variety of strategies for creating knowledge about women and their social worlds which often lies hidden from mainstream society". In their quest for knowledge feminists have used several methods to examine women's lives. Most of the research done within a feminist framework takes into consideration women's point of view. The inclusion of women as subjects of research is not a new issue in feminist research, it became more pronounced

in the 1960s. Hesse Biber et al (2004) acknowledge that during the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1960s and `70s, feminists decided to make women's issues a priority, especially their experiences, as a point of departure in their work. This led to the employment of women's concepts, theories and methods across the academic disciplines. During this time, feminists began critiquing most research asking why women were excluded from knowledge construction.

There has been a lot of debate on which methodology qualifies to be feminist even among feminist themselves. Hesse-Biber and Leckenby (2004) argues that research that is feminist is that which will bring a unique epistemological and methodological lens to the question of how to do research irrespective of the choice of method. Hesse-Biber and Leckenby (2004:209) maintain that …"Feminist researchers have continued to pursue the broadest collection of possible perspectives and tools for their research endeavours". Feminist researchers may use multiple tools and various methods to gain access in understanding the world around them. Hesse-Biber and Leckenby (2004) conclude that there is no distinct feminist method per se, but that research which is feminist can be recognised by looking at all three aspects of the research process-epistemology, methodology and method.

The following are some of the features that have been distinct in feminist methodology.

3.2.1 Experience

Women's experience has been one of the central issues in feminist methodology. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) suggest that experience is how people live and make sense of their social world and of each other in their everyday lives. Most feminists point out how androcentric and male biased other research has been, and they made experiential knowledge an important category of research. The concept of experience is used by feminists though they have different conceptions of how knowledge is connected to experience and its meaning. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002:10) say that "feminists too are divided over where ideas come from, how people make sense of experience, whether social realities can be connected to ideas and experience, and what evidence is evidence of". Though divided over what constitutes feminist research, feminists agree and negotiate mostly on what is common moral and political position in their knowledge construction. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) maintain that disputes

over how knowledge can be made through experience, has provided the theoretical context within which feminist approaches to methodology have developed.

3.2.2 Power

Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002: 13) state that "feminist methodology always entails some theory of power, since the power to produce authoritative knowledge is not equally open to all". Feminists are eager to explore what role power plays in the process of producing knowledge. Power is an important aspect of feminist methodological approaches because it has implications to knowledge production.

As I discuss in more detail below, I experienced a number of challenges during my fieldwork, which made clear to me the way that power impacted on my interactions with the people I interviewed. Having an education automatically gave me power over the research participants who did not possess similar education. During the interview, participants talked about people with education having power to do anything they want. They viewed themselves as not being powerful enough to contribute to society. The participants did not seem to realize that they had power in their own way; for example, some would-be participants refused to be interviewed. Participants thus exercised power over the research process, although they did not seem to be aware that they were doing so. In such situations, it is difficult to tell who really holds power in one way or the other. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002: 13) state that "Feminists, therefore, question who has the power to know what, and how power is implicated in the process of producing knowledge". In this study both the researcher and the participants had power, although the possession of power may not have been visible to the participants.

The methodological framework for this study has some features of feminist research methodology, the most important of which is the study's focus on women's experiences. The study also explores the social reality of the research participants.

3.3 Understanding the field before undertaking the study

Growing up in Zambia's Eastern Province, made me realize how the society treated men and women differently. My biggest motivation was the understanding that I had of the field and about the expectations of the society I was researching. My research has strong

ties to my own personal experiences. As stated earlier, I was born and grew up in Zambia. I grew up knowing that certain gender roles are distinctly for men and others are for women. As a little girl I was expected to wash dishes, while my brothers did not do any domestic chores. As I grew up, things started changing and I heard on the radio, and read in other media sources about something called 'gender equality'. This information tended to come from the so-called women's NGOs. They spread information to communities as a way of helping and empowering women. I have seen these NGOs come and go, some disappeared with unfinished agendas, and some still continue their mission to empower and educate women, even today. Being a woman, and growing up in Zambia, I have seen these NGOs influencing Zambian women in both positive and negative ways. So my choice of research topic is directly linked to my own lived experiences.

Brymann (2008) argues that the personal interests of the researcher might intrude in everything from choosing the research site, the formulation of research questions, and choice of methods, analysing and interpreting data and the type of conclusion reached. Experience is one feature in my study that indicates that this study is feminist study. My own experience and the women's experience under this study have grounds on the choice of methodological framing of the study. Hesse Biber et al (2004:3) add that "A feminist approach to knowledge building recognizes the essential importance of examining women's experience". They take a critical stance towards traditional knowledge building that does not value experience as an important part of research.

Having experienced life as a girl in Zambia, I knew that my past and experiences could influence the way I interpret the results of my study. Consequently, I was very careful about the way I conducted the study. I tried to remain unbiased, though it is very difficult to write here that I did not see my findings in relation to my life and experience. Harding (2004) argues that our different lives and different experiences as women can provide a starting point of asking new questions about women and the world around them. If we ask new questions for example, about my experiences and the experiences of my participants, it may contribute to knowledge that many feminists are seeking to obtain.

The experience of women and indeed my own experience as a researcher served as a resource for the study and since it was focused on experiences, it was also grounded in reflexivity.

3.3.1   Reflexivity

This study is a piece of feminist research because it is focused on women's experiences, and it aims to investigate how gender is constructed within particular NGO discourses. One important aspect of research that aims to be feminist, especially empirical research is that it is research that is also reflexive. Hesse- Biber and Yaiser (2004), add that reflexivity can help the researcher understand how her social position and background can become part of knowledge construction. Reflexivity is a process in which a researcher recognizes how her social background affects the research. Bryman (2008) acknowledges also that reflexivity involves reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities influence the research. Mwansa (2011) also writes that reflexivity can also be epistemological, which encourages us to reflect on our assumptions about the world and about the knowledge the researcher creates during research.

I treated other realities and truths that I came across in my research as just as valid and valuable as my own personal ones. I understood how my positionality could affect the research. My familiarity with the area of study did not directly influence how I asked the question for example, during interviews. But since I acknowledged that the realities and truths of my participants was just as valuable as my own , I was part of knowledge construction, as Hesse- Biber and Yaiser (2004:115) argue that "one's own beliefs, backgrounds, and feelings become part of the process of knowledge construction". Mwansa (2011) adds that reflexivity also urges people to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon, and informs such research. So explaining and interpretation of data may be influenced by the researchers knowledge and understanding.

3.4   The research design

This qualitative study focused on the influence of gender discourses on poor women in Zambia, especially those emanating from some organisations working on women's issues. The methodological approach used was qualitative and the method used was interviews. As Silverman (2005:112) states: "there are no right or wrong methods. There are only methods that are appropriate to your research topic and the model with which you are working". Silverman's idea that there are no right or wrong methods is similar to what many feminist consider as having no distinctive feminist method of research. Devault (2004) equally adds that feminist methodology will not prescribe a single model or formula but they should move towards new methods for writing about women's lives and activities. A qualitative approach was best suited to my topic because it involved getting the perceptions and experiences of my participants. One reason for choosing a qualitative approach according to Bryman (2008), is that, it allows the researcher to interact with the people being studied within the limited setting of any context.

3.5   Methods of data collection

3.5.1   Interviews

This study was carried out by using interviews as a way of getting information. According to Kvale & Brinkmann (2008), the qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view. Following Kvale and Brinkman's assertion, interviews were chosen for this study as one of the best ways to understand women's everyday lives and activity. Holstein and Gubrium (2006:140) state that "Interviewing is undoubtedly the most widely used technique for conducting systematic social inquiry…" Interviews provide a platform for understanding participant's social reality through talking and listening.

The interviews were prepared with the use of an interview guide, which comprised open-ended questions, enabling me to be flexible in my approach to the research. The purpose of having open ended questions was to create a favourable atmosphere for my participants and me to be able to speak openly about anything that was related to the topic under discussion without being restricted to just questions and answers. I wrote

down the questions before conducting the interviews. Sometimes when I was asking questions, I would re-phrase them in order to accommodate participants views, and in some instances, I was able to include questions which were not written down but came up through the discussion. The bringing up of new questions and re-phrasing of some prepared questions brought up a lot of new ideas and information which could have not been foreseen. This made my collection of data so rich that I had both the anticipated information and new information. During the interviews I also noticed that the more interviews I conducted, the more confident I became in changing questions and formulating new questions that I had not prepared beforehand.

Using interviews for this study also allowed me to observe the nonverbal behaviour of my participants, including their facial expressions and the ease and comfort with which they answered the questions. The other advantage of using interviews brought to this research was to enable me to manage the discussion by being cautious in controlling the direction of the discussion. I noticed that some of my participants could speak way outside the scope of my interview guide. In such cases I used the interview guide to ask them further questions so as to bring the flow of the discussion back to the focus of the research. Conducting interviews was a continuous learning process. I learnt from the interviews that were challenging and the interviews that I thought were successful. By successful I mean those interviews where I managed to get data with the full cooperation of the participants, and without interruptions. However, I cannot confirm that my research participants considered interviews successful, because I did not ask them their opinion of the interview, as I did not include that in my research design. From the interviews that I considered unsuccessful, I learnt to reflect on my questioning style and think about what could have been the cause of the interview being unsuccessful. This learning process made me improve during subsequent interviews.

3.5.2   *Preparation of interviews*

An interview guide was prepared beforehand. Since the interviews were to be recorded, the recorder was also bought to facilitate the recording procedure. I had two types of interviews to carry out; one at an institutional level and the other at the level of individuals. Since my study is about the influence of non-governmental organisations gender discourses on poor women, I had to look for organisations that work on women's issues. At the institutional level I had to contact some organisations in writing

and I followed this up by phone to arrange the appropriate dates and times for the interviews. On an individual level, I contacted women through some community based organisation that works on women's issues. These organisations gave me some names of some women, who I contacted to find out whether they would be willing to participate in the study.

3.5.3 Selecting a site for study

The study was conducted in two provinces of Zambia, the Eastern Province and the Lusaka Province. *Lusaka* is the name of a province in Zambia and at the same time the capital city of Zambia is called *Lusaka city,* which is found in Lusaka province.

3.5.4 Malowa compound

Malowa compound in the Eastern Province was selected because it is far from the capital city Lusaka (600km away), and it is considered to be a rural setting. Sikayile (2011:76) (in Maxwell, 2005) acknowledges that "it has been stated that qualitative study should be carried out in a particular social setting where something actually happens". Malowa compound was my target area for the study because it matched with the hypothesis I had for the study. Despite being considered rural, Malowa is not far from the main town of the Eastern Province, Chipata. Most of the people in this area live in thatched houses and with no proper sanitation. They have no piped water in their houses and they do not have flushable toilets, which gives them no choice but to use pit latrines. Just a few meters away from this compound there are middle class people who live just opposite Malowa compound. These have piped water in their homes and flushable toilets.

Below is the map of Zambia, (Fig 2) positioning Lusaka and Eastern Provinces as the two sites where the data for the study were collected.

Fig 2: Sites of the Study

Source: USAID, Zambia 2013

3.5.5   *Selecting respondents*

I sampled just a few individuals and a few NGOs to find the information that I was looking for. Though the findings may not apply to the entire population of that area, such kind of sampling according to Bryman (2008) relies on the selection of the information of interest by the researcher for in-depth analysis. Guided by the research design that was made, a number of respondents were selected to be interviewed from the targeted population.

I selected individual respondents who had been involved with organisations that focused on women's issues. I specifically tried to select poor women who had some idea or information about what I was looking for. The selected women had previously been involved in NGO women's projects. At the institutional level, I had to choose a few of the many NGOs that advocate for women's rights, including the umbrella organisation for all NGOs working with women's   issues in Zambia.

3.5.6 Challenges during interviews

Data collection for this study had its own challenges at both institutional and individual levels. At the Institutional level, I found it difficult to secure appointments with some of the NGOs. They seemed to be sceptical of the unknown and it was very difficult to get them to participate in my research. Some wanted to know the questions that I had prepared before agreeing to make an appointment. Not keeping scheduled appointments was another challenge: One day, for example, I went to the scheduled interview, only to find that the person I was to interview said that he was expecting some important people, and could therefore, not go ahead with our planned interview. He asked someone else to answer my questions. This was very frustrating indeed because, the interview proceeded with someone who was not even prepared for the interview.

One other source of frustration was some NGO informants' unwillingness to treat the interview formally. For example, one information officer in one of the NGOs stopped the interview to answer a phone call which lasted for roughly 20minutes; I had to wait until he finished with his phone call before the interview could continue. This may have had an impact on the way I asked questions after the interruption, because I was feeling frustrated.

Gaining access to individual participants was also a matter of negotiating and planning ahead of time, which proved to be more challenging. The collection of rich data depends on gaining access to potential respondents who may have the motivation to participate in the research. However, Kvale & Brinkmann (2008) argue that getting access to potential respondents can be challenging because it depends on a combination of factors such as location, time and budget. I had to spend money to follow up on some of my individual informants, because some of them failed to keep the appointments.

Most of the poor women who took part in this study only seemed willing to participate if they could gain something out of the study, such as money. On the individual level, I had to face many challenges; the women I was supposed to talk to; were afraid to talk to me freely, because they thought I was one of the people from some NGOs who are said to begin projects that they do not finish. I had trouble convincing them that I was simply collecting data for a specific study, even after showing them my identity card. However,

many individual participants could not read and write, so it was even harder to convince them.

Finding individual women to interview was not any easier. I had to go door to door trying to make appointments for interviews, because there was no collective public place where I could approach them from. I was dependent on the information given to me by one of the community organisations officers, who advised me to recruit participants at their homes. After making appointments, I conducted the interviews because most of them were house wives and preferred to be interviewed in their homes. During the interviews I had instances when participants would suddenly become mute and stop responding to my questions. I had to end one interview because the woman simply stopped answering my questions. Another woman agreed to the appointment, but when I went to her house for the interview; she was nowhere to be seen.

3.6   Field work

Physical presence is vital because it gives a researcher experience of having direct contact with the people taking part in the study. In the field, according to Patton (1990), the scholar is able to have direct contact with the people being researched in their natural surroundings. This is what I experienced when I conducted my field work. I felt that I was part of the group that I was studying; I felt a connection to them because I followed them in their natural surroundings.

3.6.1   Duration of study and participants in the study

I conducted 13 interviews in total. 3 were with organisations based in Lusaka, and 1 was with a community based organisation working on women's rights. 9 of my respondents were individual women in Malowa compound. One of the NGOs in this study is the umbrella body advocating for women's rights in Zambia. All the other NGOs are affiliated to this umbrella organisation. This organisation is based in Lusaka and has membership in all of the 9 provinces in Zambia. 2 of other organisations I interviewed were also in Lusaka. The field work in Lusaka took 2 weeks while it took 5 weeks in Chipata.

3.6.2   Transcribing

The interview data I collected was transcribed at the end of the period of field work. Transcribing interviews helped me to understand what my participants were trying to communicate to me. This process took me 2 months to complete, and was quite demanding. The Zambian vernacular (Chinyanja) was used during the interviews, but I had to translate my data into English language because it is the language in which my research is being undertaken. This was a big challenge because of the many differences of meaning and nuance between the languages. I was concerned that some of what my interviewees told me could be lost in my translation of interviews from Chinyanja to English. I tried to make sure that the meaning that my participants tried to convey to me was re-conveyed through my interpretation of what they said, and my translation into English.

Not all of the transcribed material was used for analysis, I had to select what I thought could work within my study and what was most interesting to analyse further. It was very interesting to note that certain themes came up during my interviews which were not in my hypothesis, so when transcribing I had to see the importance of the information that I did not expect to get from my participants. The issue of HIV/AIDS and the cultural tradition of sexual cleansing are some of the unexpected themes that came up during the interviews. Transcription helped me to have a deeper understanding of what my participants were communicating because I had to listen to each of the interviews carefully, and to hear what I may have overlooked during the actual interview.

3.6.3   Data organisation

The data I collected was organized systematically, the data from NGOs was put into one file and data from the individuals was put into another file. The data was categorized into themes and sub themes as Bryman (2008) highlights, the categorization of data helps to construct the data into central themes and subthemes to be used for analysis. Sikayile 2011 (in Bernard & Ryan, 2010:71) states that "…unless themes are discovered in the first place, no data analysis can take place". Sikayile simply shows that it may be impossible to analyse data which has not been categorized into themes. So the categorization into themes was very important and made my work easier.

3.7   Analysis

In my study, there was no distinct stage when data collection ended and analysis began; both are intertwined in each other. The process of data analysis in this study seems to have started before I undertook the field work because writing my project description and the interview guides had already given me a sense of analysing issues before I carried out the fieldwork. Analysis, therefore, seems to be an on-going activity throughout a study. Bryman (2008:539) acknowledges that "there is a repetitive interplay between the collection and analysis of data".

In this study, the analysis involved a process of searching through data from the interviews. I also had a research diary in which I kept appointment schedules and wrote down anything that I thought was important for my analysis. For example, after an interview with my participant I would ask them their age, how many children they had, their marital status and so on. These kinds of questions were not recorded but written down in my field diary for later use in my analysis. However, not everything that was written down was used in my analysis. This process also involved working with the theories and literature review presented in chapter 4. In the analysis I always considered the two main theories of my study, that is, development and discourse theory. The consideration of these two theories helped me in describing and interpreting the data. I also analysed my data in relation to the questions of the study.

3.8   Responsibility of the researcher

Qualitative research is a type of research that depends on the researcher for its direction. The researcher should understand and know the role that he or she is playing. The role of a researcher is an important aspect of the methodology of the study. According to Bryman (2008), in qualitative research, the researcher is an instrument of data collection. For the researcher to be instrumental in the research, he or she carefully reflects on everything that the study entails, such as the source of information, the validity and reliability of the data in order to produce data that is credible and authentic.

3.8.1 Relationship between researcher and participant

The relationship between the researcher and the participants should be interactive in order to collect the required data. Despite the fact that I am Zambian, my participants especially the women from Eastern Province were somewhat sceptical about trusting me. Because I was brought up in the same part of the country, I thought it would be easy for me, especially because I speak the same language as the women I interviewed. However, I have lived in Norway for almost 10yrs, and this may have created a gap between my participants and me; it could be the way I talk or communicate with others, I felt that this was to my disadvantage. I noticed that my informants had some doubts about me. It is possible that some of my participants perceived me to be a stranger in my own country and that I was different from them. This could have affected my study in a way that I could not foresee or understand while I was conducting the fieldwork.

On the other hand, the fact that I am Zambian could have given some of the women courage to freely share their experiences with me. I had not met any of the participants prior to undertaking the fieldwork, perhaps the fact that I am Zambian made them feel relaxed enough to speak to me, despite my coming from Europe.

3.8.2 Language

Knowing the local language as an interviewer contributed to establishing a good relationship with my participants. They seemed confident during interviews because we could communicate without difficult. I felt comfortable with the language because I could understand everything that my informants were trying to tell me. Mwansa (2011) (in Bryman 2008:43) writes that "knowing how words are used and the meaning of specific terms in the local vernacular is frequently viewed as crucial to an appreciation of how the social world being studied is viewed by its members". Because I could communicate with my informants fluently in a language that we both knew very well, I could understand all that was said to me, even when they used gestures while talking because I was very conversant with the language used.

3.8.3 Research ethics

Silverman (2005:257) writes that "Moreover, when you are studying people's behaviour or asking them questions, not only the values of the researcher but also the researcher's responsibilities to those studied have to be faced". Silverman is trying to show that researchers have to have responsibilities vis-à-vis their work and the people they are studying.

Part of my responsibilities as a researcher was to ensure my research was conducted in line with the highest ethical standards. To avoid causing any harm to my participants I had to abide by the ethical regulations concerning the avoidance of harm to the participants. I started by asking for authorization to conduct my study from the *Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste* (NSD-Norwegian Social Science Data Services) in Oslo. However, I was advised that because the research was not being conducted in Norway, I needed to contact the relevant authority in Zambia. I had to approach the University of Zambia Ethics Committee which controls the inflow of researchers from outside and within the country. In the final analysis I got approval to conduct my research in Zambia.

There were many ethical issues that could have risen during the course of my research. The first step I took to avoid ethical pitfalls was to inform my participants about the objectives of the study and how the findings would be disseminated. It was very difficult to convince the women about participating in the study because of the pre conceived ideas about NGOs, which come and go leaving behind unfinished agendas. Anyone who sought to interview them was compared to the experience they previously had with NGOs in their community. This may have been due to their limitations in understanding academic issues and research. It was not difficult for the NGO participants to grasp the objectives of the research and how the findings would be exposed.

Having official documents from the University of Oslo, such as an introductory letter which indicated the purpose of the study and the MA program that Iam enrolled on, helped to facilitate quick acceptance by potential participants, especially the NGOs. Due to the political sensitivity of issues surrounding NGOs and government policies, I assured the NGOs that I would not mention their official names in my study. I equally

assured the individual participants that their names would not be published anywhere, and that everything they said would remain anonymous. For this reason, all the names that I have used in this study are not real (pseudonyms), and the name of the area in which the study took place is equally not real. Some of my participants, especially the women, were reluctant to be recorded while others did not know why I needed to record them. However, after explaining the purpose of the recording, the sceptical participants were able to understand and gave their consent for me to record the interviews.

3.9   Chapter Conclusion

Choosing a qualitative approach to find out how gender discourses disseminated by NGOs affect rural women was the best way for me to consider the women's point of view. Other methods could have been used in this same study too. Choosing interviews as a way of getting information from my participants helped me understand their usual settings. It was easy for them to explain and interpret their everyday lives and activities through listening and talking. Though interviews as a method posed some challenges, the data that was collected during the research process was rich and very useful for the study and presented a deeper understanding for me to perform an informed analysis.

4 Theoretical perspective

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study and focuses on the established knowledge about the influence of various discourses on gender in the lives of rural women in Zambia, particularly those from the Eastern part of the country. These discourses are disseminated by different entities such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working for women's rights and gender equality in Zambia. The aim of the NGOs is to try and help rural women realize their full potential to contribute towards the well-being of society through development. I have made NGO discourses relating to gender equality and women's rights a focus of my research because they seem to be influential in the lives of Zambia women.

As earlier alluded to, the objective of these NGOs is mostly to raise awareness among women about the issues of gender and human rights. NGOs are sources of discourse because of the way they present the subject of gender and gender equality, and their mode of organizing their knowledge, ideas and experiences. I will use a combination of development theory and discourse theory as tools for my discussion, Further; the chapter will address the following research questions from a theoretical perspective:

1. How do local people in Zambia's Eastern Province define gender roles and what are their frames of reference?

II. How are gender roles defined by national and international NGOs in Zambia?

III. What role does lack of money and basic material possessions play in determining gender roles in the affected communities?

IV. What is the relationship between the lived experiences of the research participants and NGO discourses on gender?

4.2 Understanding "development"

> Development was established as a sub-field within different academic disciplines in the period after World War II. The main aim was originally to explore why some countries were poor and some rich, and how poor countries could achieve levels of development on par with the rich countries of the world (Bull 2006:28)

Considering the preceding quote, it can be deduced that in the initial stages, development came to be seen as a way of a striking balance between the economic levels of poor and rich countries. After the Second World War, there was a need for both poor and rich nations to stand on the same platform economically.

Therefore, development can be understood as an historical process, which has evolved considerably in the decades since the end of the Second World War. Rapley (2007) suggests that development has come a long way in the past six decades, both as an enterprise and as a discipline. Rapley understands development as a field which requires initiative and he associates it to an academic field or profession that needs to be explored further by academicians and other interested parties. However, development seems to be elusive and changes over time, in how it is understood and practiced; this means that approaches to development are focused on the specificities of each context. In this vein Thomas (2000) claims that development today, especially as a theory, is less programmatic and is more concerned with flexibility and adaptability than permanence.

Furthermore, the concept of 'development' relates to many ideas about how desirable change in society is best achieved. Development may be related to other forms of social transformation, particularly economic change. Different scholars have suggested different ways of understanding development; these include Waylen (1996:36) who argues that "development is often seen as synonymous with other wider forms of social and economic change, particularly, the spread and development of capitalist social relations". Waylen understands that other forms of social and economic change can act as stimulus to individuals to change their attitudes and values; development forms social and economic change. In Waylen's (1996) understanding, development may not be particularly easy to pin point because of its relation to other social and economic change. On the other hand, development is not only about economic growth, but also a process for reaching equality between human beings. Additionally, Clair (2006:324) argues that

"it is now widely acknowledged that development is not only about economic growth, but that it ought to be a process that leads to equitable distribution of opportunities and environmental sustainability". Clair (2006) views development as a process to include the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised, and most importantly, as a means to promoting gender equity.

At another level, other scholars have understood development from different perspectives and classify it as a discourse in its own right. According to Cornwall (2007:471), "Words make worlds. The language of development defines worlds-in-the-making, animating and justifying intervention in currently existing worlds with fulsome promises of the possible". Cornwall (2007) is trying to show that development is not only a theory or practice but an important discourse, which needs to be analysed. Cornwall (2007) argues that words which go along with the lexicon of development have the quality of buzzwords, and their meanings are transformed as they are put to the execution of development. Poverty is an example, according to Cornwall which may be considered one of the buzzwords intertwined in development because it is also one of the words that have fast changing vocabularies and constructions especially in recent years. In support of this, Cornwall (2007: 472) writes:

> Poverty is, of all the buzzwords analysed in this collection, perhaps the most compelling in its normative appeal; as John Toye notes, 'the idea of poverty reduction itself has a luminous obviousness to it, defying mere mortals to challenge its status as a moral imperative'. The moral unassailability of the development enterprise is secured by copious references to that nebulous, but emotive, category the poor and marginalised.

In the quotation above, Cornwall (2007) argues that one can only understand the `buzziness` and meanings of development if one puts them into use or practice. To this, Banik (2012:4) concurs, arguing that, "…the development agenda has now become full of buzzwords that promise more than they deliver". In Banik's (2012) interpretation, development creates expectations among benefactors and beneficiaries which may be difficult to meet. Banik (2012) perceives development as being a bunch of words that may create expectations. This is the more a reason why it is widely viewed that there is no clear consensus about how we can, or should understand development, for example; Thomas (2000) believes that there is no agreement between theorists of development about when development has been achieved, or even whether it is achievable. On the

other hand, Sittirak (1998:16), suggest that "there are no general paths to development just as there is no general definition of development". Thomas and Sittirak both understand development as something which has no clear paths to its attainment, since the definition of development is not clear, However, having argued that the definition of development is not clear, Thomas (2000:48) states that "Development means not only *good change* but also all-encompassing change, which builds on itself, occurs at both societal and individual levels which may be destructive as well as creative". Thomas is trying to understand development as something that can bring both positive and negative outcomes depending on how it is executed.

Like some other contentious terms in the field of social science, the subject of development has been perceived differently by different scholars and practitioners from diverse backgrounds. For this study, Cornwall's approach is relevant, positing development as both a discursive formation and a discourse defining worlds in the making. This is because the research takes into consideration the influence of NGO discourses on the lives of poor women in Zambia, with a particular focus on the Eastern Province. Therefore, Cornwall's approach to development as a discourse will enable me to understand and analyse my research data more effectively. However, in the course of collecting data for this study and in the process of interacting with the target group, different themes intertwined with development theory and practice emerged. Thus, in the following sections I will highlight a number of key areas within development theory and practice, which emerged as key themes in the interviews I did with rural women in the Eastern Province of Zambia.

4.2.1 Poverty and development

One of the contentious issues numerous scholars have widely written about within development is poverty. Many scholars writing about poverty have attributed it to social conditions and a lack of economic advancement. Traditional definitions of poverty have focused on income and wealth, lack of money or material possessions, (Angelsen and Wunder 2006, Mwaanga & Mwansa 2014). In her analysis Grobakken (2006:205) writes that "more than one fifth of the world's population continues to live in poverty and women are over-represented within the group. In fact the large majority of those surviving on less than a dollar a day are women". With this view, Grobakken (2006)

indicates that poverty is gendered. She goes on to say that women are important agents of change and a resource in their communities, and excluding them from the process of development is an obstacle not only to their success, but to the success of those around them.

When poverty concerns women in Africa in general, Banik (2012) also writes that the World Bank has noted that poverty is more pervasive than estimated, and efforts to fight it have to be redoubled, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa .There are countless examples of development discourses in Sub-Saharan Africa where the gender gap has been identified to be more pronounced in the rural and other less economically developed areas (Mwansa, 2011). In all these scenarios women and children have been acknowledged to be most vulnerable to poverty and negative development.

In Zambia, most local and international NGOs working on women's concerns have used a development discourse in calling for the eradication of poverty. The NGOs have underlined the poverty of women as a concrete justification for the necessity for development. In agreement with this, Chant (2007) observes that the `feminization of poverty` means that women's percentage of poverty is higher than men's and calls for women to be recognized in the development process. Data collected from the targeted NGOs for this study confirmed the interconnection when it concerns poverty, development and the gender aspects, making it part of a contextual picture of the study. The next sub-topic highlights culture and development.

4.2.2 Culture and Development

Culture is one of the central issues that may hinder or contribute to realizing development. Understanding development as a discourse, the issue of culture is important to my study because it is one of the aspects of development that is written and spoken about by different actors in the field of development. For development to take place, cultural aspects are not to be ignored, as Sewell (2005) argues, that culture is something that cannot be ignored because it continues to be valuable to society. Sewell suggests that culture has an influence in society, and it adds value to people in determining who they are. A UNESCO report (2009-2010) equally supports this position, since it suggests that culture plays an evaluative role in development since it shapes a society's values, traditions and way of life. Indeed, if culture plays an

evaluative role in development then it may be imperative for NGOs working in Zambia to understand and appreciate the role that it plays in the development process and in defining key development discourses.

When cultural aspects are gendered, mostly it is women that are affected negatively because men and women are affected differently by the culture in which they live. As Kinas and Kim (2011: 90) clarify "in most cultures, men and women are not only treated unequally (which is still the case in most parts of the world), but such inequality is also vast and sanctioned by custom and law". Most cultures and customs seem to recognize activities that are done by males as important, which gives rise to male authority and adds value (power) to the roles and activities of men (Rosaldo et al 1974). Therefore, most cultures are biased towards men and against women (Kina and Kims, 2011; Rosaldo et al, 1974).

On the other hand, culture has to be seen as a lived experience of people in different societies. When it comes to women's development, one needs to understand the culture to which the women in question belong. Bhavnani, Foran & Kurian (2003:6) argues that "to approach culture as lived experience rather than a static set of relationships permits an opening of new avenues for development…" Bhavnani et al (2003) argument shows the importance of analysing cultures within their own contexts. This may mean that development will mean different things in different contexts. The acknowledgement of culture as an important element in the development of women calls for a shift in development theory and practice to a development approach in three visions; Women, Culture, Development (WCD) (Bhavnani et al 2003). This approach is aimed at understanding development based on women's lives and their lived experiences.

This study is no exception in consideration to the aforementioned view of the relationship between culture and development; it deliberately approached culture as lived experience. Data collected from the interviews equally had a lot of output in terms of cultural experiences. Thus, utilizing the WCD lens as part of the analysis tool may aid the understanding of how culture impacts the lived experiences of development in the lives of women in Zambia. The WCD approach aims to comprehend how culture as a lived experience can add value to development; as Bhavnani et al (2003:8) explains:

> A WCD approach argues that to speak of `culture` simultaneously with development encompasses more poignantly the everyday experience, practice, ideology and politics of Third World Women, and thus may provide clearer ideas for a transformative development, and a development that attends to aspects of people's lives beyond the economic.

The above quote supports the idea of empowering women who in turn could be part of an engine for development. The more women that are empowered in the `third world` countries, the higher the development index will climb. The next sub-topic explains in detail the relationship between development and empowerment.

4.2.3 Empowerment and development.

The topic of empowerment is important to my study because NGOs in Zambia seem to sensitize poor women to take action to meet their own needs. This may also be important to understanding development as a discourse because through empowerment poor women may be made to understand that development can come about through doing things themselves.

Grobakken (2006:206) writes that "empowerment is a crucial aspect to consider when focusing on gender and the feminisation of poverty". Just as there are many definitions of poverty, empowerment is also defined in different ways, however, it maintains a key feature of the type of development 'buzzword' described by Cornwall, insofar as its meaning tends to derive from the way it is used. Grobakken (2006:207) defines empowerment as "signifying a change in a person's range of life-influencing choices, and women are a particularly vulnerable and disempowered group". Grobakken sees vulnerability in women and that they are likely to be affected in the process of development. Thomas (2000:35) also adds that "Empowerment is a desired process by which individuals, typically including the `poorest of the poor`, are to take direct control over their lives". Thomas shows that empowerment may be a necessary process to get out of poverty. It seems there is a link between poverty and disempowerment, because poverty, according to Wright (1994), is a by-product of social causes, hence, "empowerment is both a dimension of poverty and one of the weapons with which to fight it" (Grobakken 2006:207).

However, some scholars have argued that it has been difficult to clearly say what women empowerment may actually mean. Chant (2006:92) argues that "…definitions of empowerment remain contested, as do implications of empowerment, both for women themselves and for their relationships with others".

4.3   Gendering development

Gender and development are two issues that have historically been inseparable. There is a rich history of theories on the relationship between women and development (Jaquette and Summerfield 2007).This has been seen in the progression from Women in Development (WID), to Women and Development (WAD) and finally to Gender and Development (GAD). The 1970s and 80s marked a new phase of debate on women's equality which led to the promotion of the Women in Development (WID) approach. The origins of WID pointed to women's invisibility and exclusion from development. It was argued that women needed to be treated on equal terms with men (Jaquette and Summerfield 2007). This approach emphasized women's rights to development but fell short of improving unequal relationships, which led to a shift of focus. Bhavnani et al (2003:4) acknowledged that "WID then shifted its underlying discourse from equity to anti-poverty in the mid-1980s". This shifting of the underlying discourse was meant to complement the 1970s approach to development. Theorists and practitioners who promoted the WID approach argued that development would be achieved if women's resources were utilised to the full; but the implementation of women's participation in the economy and gender equity differed from the anti-poverty discourse because "the former targeted women in order to increase their efficiency in productive process, and thus promote economic growth through the efficient use of women's labour" (Bhavnani et al 2003:5).

In the 1970s, the women and Development (WAD) approach raised some critical questions about the WID paradigm. According to Bhavnani et al (2003:5) "WAD argued that as women's contributions have always been central to any possibility of development, the question to be asked was why women were excluded from projects of development". The WAD approach did not only focus on integration of women into development but it also focused on the third world nations in relation to the richer nations as regards to development (Bhavnani et al 2003).

In the 1980s, the Gender and development (GAD) approach was developed with the idea of improving disparities between women and men. Since then the gender perspective has been struggling to be set into development and efforts are still being made to integrate gender into development (Jaquette and Summerfield (2007). "GAD is presently the discourse used by most scholars, policy planners, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to discuss the relationship between development processes and women's inequality". Bhavnani et al (2003:5), citing Canadian Council for International Co-operation (1991:5) writes that "GAD looks, to the potential in development initiatives to transform unequal social/gender relation and to empower women". From the above statements, it could be deduced that issues of gender and development have a long and on-going history, but they seem to have different impact according to the context. Jaquette and Summerfield (2007:17) argues that "WID and GAD have had an impact on development discourse and on the way aid is administered, but they have been less successful in making a material difference for the vast majority of women in developing countries". It is also argued that all the three approaches WID, WAD and GAD, fall short on the ways in which issues such as capitalism, patriarchy and race/ethnicity shape women's subordination and oppression (Bhavnani et al 2003). Jaquette and Summerfield (2007), try to understand how development discourses have succeeded somewhere in the world, but suggest they may have not been successful for the women in developing countries.

WID, WAD, and GAD have also been critiqued for not taking culture into account. For example, the three approaches tend to see third world women as static and unchanging in their culture. Third world women are "homogenised" and treated as victims of their own cultures. It has been argued that the three approaches make ethnocentric assumptions about relations between men and women in different societies, seeing only exploitation, subordination and conflict rather than cooperation and the importance of family bonds. (Bhavnani et al 2003).

Approaches to gender and development aim at strengthening and consolidating the situation for both men and women in order to achieve gender equality and to further the development agenda in different parts of the world (Waylen 1996). Such approaches also aim for the type of development that would lead to change in the relations between men and women. Since development is relative according to time and context, Waylen

(1996:36) acknowledges that "Development too is highly gendered and has a very different impact on men and women". She further argues that equality should be necessary for development because if men and women stand on the same foot, they will contribute equally to development. This is similar to Pearson's (2000) position, who writes that development must be informed by a gender analysis while paying particular attention to the needs of poor women. Banik (2012:4), on the other hand, has argued that "in the development discourse, there is a considerable amount of attention directed at poverty reduction, while very few speak of inequality reduction. It is this reluctance to address the problem of inequality by both international and actors that must be addressed at the earliest"

However, this study seeks to address the dominant paradigm of gender and development (GAD) as it focuses on NGO discourses relating to gender and gender equality. The study attempts to uncover how the said discourses do or do not relate to the lived experiences of the target women in the context of development. But there are certain obstacles that seem to impede this process, particularly in Sub Saharan African countries such as Zambia, which is where this study was conducted. The sub-topics that follow highlights on how gender roles, marriages and HIV/AIDS have impacted development discourses among the target research population.

4.3.1   Gender roles in Zambia

It is relevant to the questions raised in this study to consider how gender roles may affect development in Zambia. However, to begin with, it is imperative to have a starting point of what gender may mean. Lindsey (1990) defines gender as those social, cultural and psychological aspects linked to males and females through particular social contexts, and the expected behaviour associated with any given status is referred to as a *role*. Analysing gender and behaviour associated with men and women is always culturally and historically specific (Moore, 1988). In Zambia for example, there are certain roles that are specifically attributed to each gender. Women do most of the domestic chores in a home, while men wait and sit for the women to give them food (Scott 2006). Previous studies in Zambia have shown that both men and women regard housework as the responsibility of women and girls. Furthermore, many women actually disapprove of men's involvement in it (World Bank Report, 2004).

However, this scenario is changing, as women take on paid jobs outside of the home, which has long been perceived as men's domain. This may make it seem that women are equal to men, but in reality this is not the case (Scott 2006). Despite having well-paid jobs, many women still find themselves carrying even heavier burdens because they have to meet the demands of both the labour market and the home. On the other hand HIV/AIDS has claimed the lives of many male figures in the homes, leaving some women to be the sole providers of resources in the home (Mwansa 2011). The next sub-topic shades light on HIV/AIDS, development and the related gender issues.

4.3.2 Gender and HIV/AIDS in the context of development

Although HIV/AIDS is a global pandemic, the majority of those living with it are in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to past studies, HIV/AIDS prevalence is higher for women than for men in Sub-Saharan Africa (Mwansa, 2011). Following Cohen, Kelly, Kalipeni et al, Mwansa (2011: 39) writes that "generally research shows that women and girls are more vulnerable to poverty and HIV/AIDS as compared to men and boys". Differences between men and women (largely based on culture, economic inequality, and vulnerability) have been identified as one of the major factors contributing to the spread of HIV/ AIDS (Allen and Thomas 2000).

Male dominance in African culture is a factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS because women cannot negotiate safer sex (Mwansa, 2011). Cultural factors seem to affect women and men differently in matters affecting their sexuality. A study on culture and sexuality in Southern Africa indicates that a woman who asks her partner to use protection during sex is seen as challenging his authority (Susser and Stein 2000). Zambian women for example, are not an exception, as the African Women's Decade 2010-2012: (2012:37) Annual Review reports that "One reason Zambian women are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS is that they have difficulties controlling or negotiating sexual relations and condom use, a 2009 U.N. study found".

Against that background Thomas & Overbaugh (2000) write that the social determinants of women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS are due to gender disparities, poverty, and lack of education, sexual norms and culture. In South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, young women aged 15 to 24 are three to six times more likely to be infected than young men (Thomas & Overbaugh, 2000:1582). They go on further to write that:-

Lack of gender equality and lack of education among women contribute to high rates of infections because gender norms shape attitudes towards information on sex, sexuality, sexual risk-taking, and fidelity, they play a critical role in determining the cause of the epidemic (Thomas & Overbaugh, 2000:1583).

When it comes to HIV/AIDS deaths in the family, it is girls who are expected to substitute the roles of the departed ones. Gachuhi (1999:8) reports on a study on the impact of HIV/AIDS on education systems in Eastern and Southern Africa:

HIV/AIDS is already increasing educational disparities between girls and boys because girls are removed from school to look after and care for siblings and relatives, to substitute for the productive work of other family members or to save the costs of school fees. Moreover, girls may be forced into early marriage, as they are pushed out or try to escape from overcrowded extended families.

Not only are uneducated girls ignorant about HIV/AIDS, they are also vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection. Obtaining formal education can lead to behavioural change because it may affect thought processes, and research shows that educated people are likely to be exposed to prevention information and likely to have control over their own behaviour (Jukes et al 2008). Despite noting that uneducated women are at a higher risk of infection, Jukes et.al (2008:44) focus on the ways in which obtaining education can lead educated people to have many sexual partners. They state that: "For women, one consequence of higher levels of education is that they start having sex later but delay marriage to an even greater extent. This leads to them being single and sexually active for a longer period of time and thus to having a greater number of sexual partners".

The impact of HIV/AIDS on development in Zambia has been so huge that most NGOs are working to enhance HIV/AIDS education in schools to raise awareness among school pupils at an early stage of their lives (Mwansa 2011). This is an intervention that may save some school-going children from getting involved in early marriages as a way of getting out of their poverty related situation.

4.3.3 *Marriage in sub-Saharan Africa*

In most of sub-Saharan African, a man has to pay a 'bride price' to a woman's family, in compensation for her family's loss of her reproductive and productive services (Dodoo, 1998). Marriage dowry commonly known as *lobola*[4] in Southern Africa is paid to the bride's family in most Southern African countries such as Zimbabwe, South Africa and Zambia. Parents should give their consent on the amount that should be paid, usually in the form of money or animals, to legalize the marriage (Ansel 2001). Ansel further explains that *lobola* also serves lineage functions in the family, since marriage unites families and not just as individuals. *Lobola* paid for a daughter can also be transferred to her brother and used to pay for his future bride (Ansel 2001).

At another level and as already reported, Mwansa (2011) notes that men in most Zambian marriages have more power than women because they are men, and due to cultural expectations… Men are expected to have multiple partners while women are expected to be monogamous (Mwaanga 2012). The subordination of women and the indulgence of men has been a feature of marriage under the customary law of many countries in Africa. Writing about customary law in Southern Africa, Bennet (2004:1) writes that "Customary laws derives from social practices that the community concerned accepts as obligatory. Normative system of this nature is never directly accessible to the outsider". These laws differ according to the people they serve, and they remained largely unwritten even after the colonization of southern Africa began (Bennet 2004). Although customary laws are not written, they are adhered to in most African countries, and interpreted to take account of the lived experience of the people they serve (Ndulo 2011). Customary laws are mostly administered by Chiefs and Head-Men in villages. Normally these laws place women in a subordinate position in relation to men (Ndulo 2011). Ndulo (2011:87) goes further, writing about customs and women's rights in Africa, and states that:-

> In a typical African country, the great majority of the people conduct their personal activities in accordance with and subject to customary law. Customary law has great impact in the area of personal law in regard to matters such as marriage, inheritance and traditional authority, and because it developed in an era dominated by patriarchy some of its norms conflict with human rights norms guaranteeing equality between men and women.

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[4] This is a traditional Southern African custom whereby the man pays dowry to the family of his fiancée for her hand in marriage (Scott 2006)

Most marriages are conducted under customary laws in rural areas as opposed to urban areas where both customary and statutory laws are applied. Women in marriages are the most subordinated when it comes to customary laws in Africa. Oyeronke (2001:1096) write that "Across Africa the category generally translated as wife is not gender specific but symbolizes relations of subordination between any two people". In the above statement, Oyeronke is trying to show how a wife in an African situation is relegated to subordination. This subordination of wives is related to my study because the women I interviewed, as I will discuss in later chapters, seemed to find refuge in being wives. Despite being in a subordinate role as Oyeronke puts it, they still feel honoured to be associated with it.

4.4   Discourse and development

The term *discourse* relates to a wider range of meanings, "It is characterized by its difference from a series of terms, such as text, sentence and ideology. Each of these oppositional terms marks out the meaning of discourse" (Mills 2007:3). Mills understands discourse as language which communicates a meaning in a context. On the other hand, discourse has been theorised as a form of social practice which has been used to construct some aspect of reality from a particular perspective, and it has been acknowledged that the concept discourse has several difficulties, both analytical and theoretical; in fact it is a highly contested term (Litosseliti and Sunderland, 2002).

In order to fully gain the understanding of development, it is vital to acquaint oneself with the central Faulcaldian concept of discourse itself. One cannot outline discourse in the absence of power, because the two are linked. Luke (2005:62) states that "…we use the vocabulary of power in countless different ways in different contexts and for different purposes". Scott and Marshall (2005) define discourse as the structure, functions and patterns used to understand a social phenomenon. This shows the written and unwritten rules overriding the understanding of life and its theoretical and physical existence. For societies to presume their life situation, any society needs a frame of reference which is relative to its position. So this frame of reference is the discourse that characterises the means of thinking and the construction of their world. However, it is

worth noting that issues characterise society subject to the actors' views in relation to dynamics not necessarily within a specific society but in a rather discursive space. Mills (2007) refers to this school of thought as the site of struggle when he observes that discourses do not occur in solitude, but are the object and site for struggle, meaning that they are not static but are the platform of perpetual contestation over meaning. This could be because of the power within discourse, thus, discourse cannot be fully described in the absence of an argument on power. On the other hand, Mills (2007) contends that a discourse is not a detached collection of statements, but alignments of sentences that are endorsed by a contextual society and determined by that particular setting with influence to the manner that society endures its actuality.

Discourse may not only be a form of knowledge but also a practice that NGOs in Zambia have maintained. In this study what I mean by NGO discourses, are the written, spoken and interactive communication that they use to reach out to the targeted recipients. There is a certain way the NGOs in Zambia try to speak and write about the women of Zambia. Their discourses are presented according to the NGOs perception of the world. This is why Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002:10) highlight that "…discourses are often institution-related, and it is this which helps endow them with their potential for power". So the powers of these institutions (NGOs) can be identified from the discourses that they bring and disseminate. The NGOs referred to in this study are local NGOs working to improve women's lives in Zambia. These NGOs are funded both locally and internationally.

Most governments and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) continue to set development targets, for example, in 1995 the United Nations World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen pledged to reduce by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 (Thomas 2000). Marcussen (1996:406) states that "on average it is estimated that NGOs today account for about 13 per cent of total ODA (official development assistance)". NGOs are engaged in a wide range of activities, which include projects related to the delivery of health, education, human rights and the provision of emergency relief (Borchgrevink, 2006). Promoting gender equality and empowering women in Africa is central to the promotion of rapid and equitable growth (African Development Bank 2012). Shutt (2009) also writes that changes that NGOs are trying to achieve include shifting village-level power relations between men and women,

challenging inequitable gender relations, and changing the ideas and beliefs of individuals. According to Clarke (1998: 38), citing Edwards and Hume:

> donor support for NGOs is predicated at least as much on their supposed role in democratizing the political process as on their role in the provision of welfare services, [yet] rarely in the literature is it made clear exactly how NGOs . . . are supposed to contribute to `democratization' and the formal political process.

Examining some of the objectives of NGOs operating in the third world, Marcussen (1996) writes that in order to scale up development NGOs have to relate to a larger political and social-economic process, Shutt (2009) has analysed some of the documentation of big international NGOs (BINGOs), and she has observed that there is a lack of clarity about the changes NGOs are seeking to achieve, and the means by which these changes are to be achieved. She also claims that NGO staff members working in different parts of the world are likely to have different ideas of how change should be achieved, and about how change happens.

4.5   Chapter conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the theoretical framework of the thesis. It shows how development could be understood in relation to gender, poverty, and culture. By linking development to the realities of people, the chapter shows how NGO discourses on gender may be related to development.

5   Analysis

The analysis and discussion presented in this chapter will firstly locate the study within the framework of the theories and concepts explored in the first chapter. Secondly, the discussion takes into consideration the `distant` influences of agents that are not primarily part of the contextual socio-cultural landscape of the participants. What is being referred to here are those discourses that have either stood independently of the NGO discourses on gender equality, or those that have blended with the research participants' local values. The analysis attempts to answer the sub-questions as outlined in Chapter 4, which refer to: I) the construction of gender among the research participants and the dominant frames of reference used to define it, II) how NGOs working on women's issues among the participants define women's issues, III) how poverty determines gender roles in the affected communities, and IV) the relationship between the participants' lived experiences and the NGO discourses on gender.

5.1   The construction of gender in Zambia

As already alluded to in Chapter 1, gender seems to be understood differently by the different rural women that were interviewed on one hand, and by the urban women on the other. This is may be due to the influence of the dominant cultures prevailing in particular societies, as is the case in most parts of the world, where gender is sanctioned by custom and law (Kinas & Kim 2011). My observations from the field clearly show that knowledge of gender is perceived differently and received with mixed feelings by the participants who were asked about it. For example, a participant from community 1 (C1) viewed at gender as a "process that the government and NGOs are using to make women get education just like men have" (Amai Busa[5] C1). Another participant from the same community told me that "Gender is a way of making married men feel degraded and disrespected by their wives" (Amai Mangani C1). It is, therefore, tempting to deduce that the participants' knowledge about gender appears to contradict their primary contextual cultural norms, because the content of the NGO discourses on gender tends to differ from their lived experiences.

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[5] Amai` means `mother of``.......or `wife of .... This is the respectful way to address a married woman or a woman who has children. It is a common practice in most Southern African ethnic groups.

One of NGO1's objectives is to strive to empower women so they can be at the same level as men, through mainstreaming gender in their programs. As such, attempts by the NGOs to empower women `injures` the dominant cultural norms, which strictly puts men at the center of power and relegates women to being subordinate to men. In the rural setting, the findings were even more clearly visible, because the research participants tend to live by what they learn from community gate keepers. Parents and other older people, as the custodians of socio-cultural norms, transmit key oral traditions to the younger generations to shield them from outside forces. This interpretation was supported by the Programme Officer at NGO2, which operates in both urban and rural Zambia, who mentioned that "women in rural areas find it hard to change what their society has made them to believe, thus, programmes focusing on gender and sexuality issues are most of the times given less attention or completely rejected" (Mrs. Simananse NGO2). Hence rural women with limited formal education become very skeptical about accepting and assimilating the gender discourses that are championed by the NGOs on one hand, and by the media on the other. The research participants characterised gender issues as being more or less western-centric[6]. One thing which was noted was that everything that was different from their beliefs, and was brought to them by NGOs, was considered western by the participants. Some participants went to the extent of claiming that "being African and being Western are two different causes, thus, the upbringing of the people in Africa is quite different from the upbringing of the people in the West" (Amai Dailess C2).

The findings regarding how the research participants construct gender support Lindsey`s (1990) point of view, according to which, gender is linked to the social, cultural and psychological aspects linked to males and females. Some participants defined gender according to how they experience the social and cultural aspects of their lives, and it is likely this has far reaching effects and a direct bearing on how they understand gender. When it comes to gender roles, some participants responded that this should be specifically according to sex, where men do much heavier tasks such as cultivating land and building houses, while women remain in the kitchen and look after young children. Some participants expressed a lot of satisfaction in the way gender roles have been shared between women and men, specifically those roles pertaining to house chores. Some participants claimed to be content with the way things are, and most of

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[6]This refers to ideas and cultures emanating from the Global North.

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them were comfortable with their gendered roles and felt their roles should not be changed or inverted. To some participants, changing the status quo would be tantamount to disrespecting their men; as one participant put it "Chupasa lini ulemu, mwanalume nimwanalume ndithu" [That does not show respect, a man is a man and that's it!] (Amai Eletina C2).

Similar statements were recorded in both communities. This view could be attributed to the deeply rooted cultural norms on one hand, and the limited formal education of the participants on the other. These two aspects seem to complement and reinforce one another to sustain the status quo. In fact, according to the research participants, women tend to carry the burden of shame whenever they see a man doing house chores "we say bana mudyesa" [he has been sedated (without his knowledge) with traditional herbs to make him submissive and emotionally weak to his wife] (Amai Busa C1). This finding reflects the findings, as earlier indicated, published in a 2004 World Bank Report on women in Zambia, which indicated that most women actually disapprove of men's involvement in house chores.

5.1.1 *Gender issues in relation to development*

Jaquette & Summerfield (2007) emphasise that there is a need for women to be treated on equal terms with men for development to occur. However, in C1 and C2, where there are seemingly culturally-protected challenges in addressing the disparities between men and women, development will be hard to be realised. Borrowing the words of the Information Officer for NGO1 who complained about the bottle necks to development that he found in the field:

> We are trying to strike a balance that will try and get rid of these counter development cultures; for example, men seem to have power over most of the women in Zambia… Power especially, for instance, we have heard that the husband who doesn't beat you, then doesn't love you. So we are trying to discourage those beliefs (Mr. Joshua Mulumba NGO1)

Having gendered roles already confirms that women and men are different, and their contribution to development will vary as such. In other words, this could mean that one gender has taken and manipulated the available productive roles, while the other goes for the more submissive roles. For example, a good number of participants in both C1

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and C2 claimed that most men bring an income while women do house chores. This automatically gives the men in question the productive roles because they provide income to the family, while women take on the submissive and less important roles of working for the family and for their men. This scenario found in C1 and C2 does not support Clair's (2006) stance, when she argues that development has to lead to equitable distribution of various forms of opportunities and not just economic resources. However the kind of `development` prevalent in the target communities may not be in line with the aims and objectives of the NGOs working there, because of the cultural barriers (or may be differences), as already reported. A participant in C1 responded that "Chitukuko tichifuna, manje chifunika kunkala mwamene tizibila naseo, osati va chizungu lyonse" [Development, we want, but it has to be in a way that we also know, not always full of western ideas] (Amai Magi C2). However, the NGOs that were targeted in this study do not have approaches to development that focus on the specificities of each context in which development is being promoted. Thus, the NGOs are more interested in the seemingly `foreign` objectives, which are to be met at the expense of local discourse, all in the name of development. Thomas (2000) claims that development today, especially as a theory, should be less programmatic and more concerned with flexibility and adaptability, than with permanence. Hence, development should be seen as a relative term that should depend on a particular situation.

Thomas (2000:48) further states that "Development means not only *good change* but also all-encompassing change, which builds on itself, occurs at both societal and individual levels which may be destructive as well as creative". The members of the community in C1 and C2, especially the gate keepers who understand the local discourses better, are in the best position to assess the direction and kind of development taking place. In practice, by doing house chores, women contribute to development in their own context according to their way of life: for their life to move on they depend on the well-being of their homes and environment. If they neglected doing house chores to join the labour market like the men, then the home-based day-to-day living suffers, thus, no development at that level. If this happens, it may cause a ripple effect where husbands will go to work hungry, thus affecting the labour industry negatively. The environment will also be affected because there will be no one taking care of homes, therefore, posing a huge risk to family and community health. In a nutshell, if we say development means all-encompassing change, as Thomas (2000)

writes, then women opting to do house chores in contrast to other jobs, equally contribute to change in an appropriate manner. This, however, is relative and depends on how someone understands what constitutes change or development.

Thus far, the data from the field confirms that the interpretation of gender is something that the research participants could not fully comprehend and appreciate. A good number of participating women argued and stated that gender is a phenomenon that is as much connected to sharing the house chores with men as anything else. To a greater extent, most participants suggested that having knowledge about gender, means a woman has created a platform to give part of her responsibilities in the house to her husband. This preconceived understanding of gender has prejudiced many rural women and led them to shun any familiarity or/and knowledge about gender. The participants argued that gender will just undermine the way they have lived and been brought up as women in a traditional manner. As one participant said:-

> … I don't know, but I think everyone can be helped as I have already said that ... everyone can be helped, but in some homes, it doesn't make any sense. "Vi gender ivi niva bazungu kaili vawela lomba". (This gender is for Europeans because it has just come now). It wasn't there long time ago; this is why it has brought a lot of problems. In a way it helps, it is true that women are the ones who suffer in marriages, being killed and also being raped. (Amake Junior, C1)

Amake Junior seems to be sitting on the fence by accepting the `new` discourses while at the same time condemning them as being negative to the local cultural landscape. The other thing that came out critically from the data collected is a misconception among the participants that a woman loses her reputation or dignity if she neglects to fulfill the roles that society expects her to fulfill. Many influences play a part in making the interviewed women continue to appreciate their original ways of life, rather than what has been brought to them by the different agents of `development`. One of the greatest influences is religion. The section below discusses religion and its impact on the ways of living in the target communities.

5.1.2   *Religion, cultural traditions and gender constructions*

As already discussed in Chapter 1, religion and its related cultural traditions are deeply embedded in the lives of most women in Zambia. Rural women account for a larger number of people in the country who hold religion, especially Christianity and traditional African religions, in high esteem. One practical example that came from the field is the way most women that participated in the interview appreciate the culture of over-respecting or `worshiping' men, and their subordination to men. This school of thought is something influenced more by the principles of the Bible. Christianity appears to have influenced how women and men perceive gender roles because the Bible clearly indicates in certain verses specific roles for specific gendered bodies. Because of the high levels of Christian influence in Zambia, it was not by coincidence that all of the participants said that they were Christian, although they still retain certain rites from traditional African religions. In Christian teachings, a man is always 'the head' over a woman, as it is written in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible,(in the Book of Ephesians 5, verse 23): "for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body". When asked why she thinks she cannot have the same role as a man, one participant said:

> Ok we can try, but we can't be over them, that is a fact! We can't be over them. Just like in the beginning, Adam and Eve, "eyambilila kupangiwa ni Adam, mukazi enzokonka pa mbuyo". (Adam was the first to be created by God and the woman was created last) which means that we have to follow that, because it is the same even for us. (Amake Limbikani C1)

The quote above is an excerpt from my field diary and shows how Christianity has blended with local customs to have an impact in the lives of the target community. It is such ways of thinking and beliefs, (i.e. that women are under men according to biblical principles), that may create difficulties for the agents of women's empowerment (NGOs), especially if the one who seeks to explain does not share the same principles from the Bible.

However, in some ways, the NGO agendas have been achieved with the help of `powerful` religions as Christianity (at least when compared to some traditional African

religions). One of the traditional religious rituals that the NGO discourse has managed to almost eradicate in the rural areas is sexual cleansing[7] when a woman's husband dies. This came out vividly from the findings as something that is no longer practiced in this era of HIV/AIDS. The participants cited the Christian faith and the escalating HIV/AIDS pandemic as the reasons why they cannot practice this ritual anymore. One participant, who lost her first husband but has since remarried, narrated that her in-laws pressed her to submit to the ritual, but she resisted. She claimed that not only was she afraid of the prospect of HIV/AIDS infection, but because she is also a devout Christian and says "my faith and the God I serve do not support such primitive rituals" (Amake Junior C1). Nevertheless, another participant put it that such rituals as sexual cleansing have been eradicated just on face value as the enlightened community gate keepers publicly discourage them, but that many people secretly practice it to this day. She further clarified that "Sexual cleansing is important in our culture because it is done to drive away ghosts from a widow because immediately after the demise of her husband, a woman carries with her, a ghost… if not sexually cleansed one can die early or worse still, run mad." (Amai Elinat C2).

The disempowerment of women through ritual practice in rural Zambia is slowly taking a different shape. This could be attributed to the voiceless getting an opportunity to be enlightened through the NGOs and the public media. Through such agents, it can be deduced that at least another ritual that usually goes with sexual cleansing has been eradicated; this is the ritual of banishing away a woman who has refused to be cleansed sexually. Amake Junior in C1 as reported above narrated that in her case, she was not banished from her husband's village, but left to fend for herself with 3 children, and without any formal employment. However, she was quick to point out that her Aunt, who became widowed 7 years earlier and refused sexual cleansing, was driven off her husband's property "Her husband's relatives in addition to banishing her also took away her livestock, forcing her to start all over in her advanced age" she narrated. As I have already suggested, this could be attributed to either the work of the NGOs or the Christian domination, which surely discourages practices that are against the principles of the Bible. On the other hand, Christianity and African traditional religious discourses

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[7]This is a Zambian traditional ritual in which a widow is inherited by her in-laws after she has sex with one of her dead husband's male relatives. According to the traditional belief that is mostly found in the southern and northern and parts of the Eastern provinces, the ritual frees a widow from her husband's ghost.

have blended with local culture to form a hybrid culture (Mwaanga & Mwansa 2014); this is mostly seen during marriage and funeral ceremonies, according to the research participants. This blend is definitely attributed to how strong and important certain rituals may be in the lives of the local people. Although the NGO and Christianity discourses are so powerful and dominating, and have the capacity to over shadow `weaker` discourses, some local rituals are so deeply embedded that there was no option but for them to blend with Christianity and form a hybrid culture. The whole construction of gender roles lies in this hybrid. When one participant was asked if the NGO discourse contradicted her way of living, she expressed her sentiments as follows:

> There is no much difference, but I think western culture should not exactly be compared to our African culture because they are different. Our upbringing is very much far from their upbringing. So we can't really be like them from the west, because the way of life is different, our life is that of respect, but them they bring this gender issues that we are supposed to be equal with men, that I say NO!, it can't happen in our African culture. We differ in the way we do and hear different things. A man cannot be told to wash clothes, that can't happen; it shows lack of respect to men. There are certain chores that you can help each other, but not that of washing clothes for example. However, some women have leant these new ways and are happy with it, but not me. (Mai Dailesi C2)

This example may mean that some women in rural areas still want to maintain certain aspects of their initial ways of life and not just completely adjust to other cultures. Sewell (2005) argues that culture should not be ignored in development because it continues to be valuable to society. The women I interviewed do not really see any harm in being subordinated to men. So if cultural aspects are to be considered in development, it may be prudent to equally consider certain cultural aspects that are very dear to these women, and find a way they can define development through their own lived experiences. That is to say, if they feel the subordinated gender role gives them an identity, it would be important for advocates of development to see how development can be defined according to the women's way of life. Some participants did not see subordination to their men as symbolizing inequality, but as a way of life. If these women do not see inequality in their way of living, then they may construct development according to the way they live their lives. Although my findings reflect Sewell's (2005) argument that culture should not be ignored in development, however,

it is not clear which culture is `good enough` for the promotion of development. If we agree with Rosaldo et al (1974), that in general, culture recognizes activities that are done by men as important, then Sewell's idea of recognising culture in development cannot stand, because it will only recognise men in the process of development that is, if we buy Rosaldo et al (1974) view of culture. On the other hand, Sewell does not really explain which culture is good enough to foster development; he puts it generally that cultures are important in development. In this case, the argument that Sewell and Rosaldo et al bring still remains debatable, because if cultures should be recognized in development, why should it only concerns men? This also applies to the women who took part in this study; they seem to be protecting their way of life by maintaining subordinated gender roles, but the same way of life that they seek to protect seems to be judged by the NGOs as countering the development process. Most of the participants wanted to maintain how they live rather than allowing NGOs to introduce them to other ways of living. This is related to what Bhavnani et al (2003) argue: that it is important to analyse cultures strictly in their own contexts. I concur with Bhavnani et al (2003) because if cultures are considered according to the locality of the people being studied, then development will be defined based on the particular context of the study. The rural women who took part in the study seem to claim that the gender and development discourses being introduced to them are not related to their way of life.

While Sewell (2005) wants to promote cultures in development, others such as Kinas and Kim (2011) argue that most cultures are gendered and they affect men and women differently. My findings show that men and women are treated differently in their communities. It may be difficult to achieve development if men and women cannot have the same status in their culture. It is very clear from the women's narratives that their lived experiences are full of inequalities simply because men and women perform different roles. In the construction of gender among the research participants in the Eastern province of Zambia, people have different capabilities depending on their sexed bodies. The reason why people have different capabilities may be seen from the kind of roles that are assigned to each sex. The general feeling among the research participants is that the roles of women and men should not be changed. Any attempt to change the status quo may result in the loss of the very essence of being a woman or man. The difference of roles between men and women seem to be assigned at birth. The value a boy child is accorded is different from the value given to a girl child. Boys seem to be

appreciated more because of the belief that they will be the leaders of society, while girls will be submissive to the boys. I can relate this to what Scott (2006) observes: men will go out and do jobs in order to bring an income to the home, while women are left to do house chores. Having these seemingly fixed roles means that most women consider that marriage is a good way to maintain their way of life.

However, some of the women are willing to continue embracing their culture because they want to maintain their way of life and to continue commanding respect as married women. Other participants did not seem to know what really was good for them. Yet others seemed to construct gender the way they do because that is their only alternative way to sustain their lives. In this case their sustenance is dependent on their men because they are their breadwinners with the resources to meet their basic needs and wants. For such participants, the success of their life is directly linked to being submissive to their male counterparts. On the other hand however, such women seem to appreciate the gender equality knowledge from NGOs, but they are skeptical about putting it into practice, probably because of fear of losing their men. One participant put it this way:

> Gender knowledge is vital to our lives. But the only problem is that if we continue listening to these NGOs and put what they say in practice, then things will continue being bad for us women, because we have no jobs or money to earn a living on our own. We just have to follow what our husbands' wants us to do because sometimes, we face problems in marriages because of trying new things that we hear from people. For me I think, sometimes it is good to change the way we live but not very easy to do that. Sometimes we need to have a lot of knowledge about gender, may be it can help us (Amai Dailesi C2)

The quote above shows that this woman feels that having gender knowledge may be helpful, but at the same time it has brought a lot of problems. She seems to appreciate that it is mostly women who have problems in marriages; however, she does not explain in detail what she considers to be the good side or the bad side of having gender knowledge. Such sentiments may also make it difficult for women to make the best informed choices for themselves.

On another level, some participants seem to appreciate the gender knowledge disseminated by NGOs as being helpful in their lives especially in situations where they have no men by their side.

One example is regarding the grabbing of property and other estates. When a spouse dies, there is a tendency by the relatives of the deceased to seize property from his widow. In such cases most widows seek help from NGOs to rescue them from this situation. In situations like this, NGOs and their knowledge are highly appreciated and they are not labeled as `western`, but helpful and productive to local society. In such cases, affected women easily accept and embrace the NGO discourses because they make a lot of sense in such desperate situations; one participant observed that:

> … Gender could be seen in many ways; on the other side gender is good. What I'm only mentioning here are lighter things, but there are many big issues, for example, you may find that you buy things in the house with your husband, but when he dies, his relatives will get everything that belonged to you. You remain with nothing and suffering with children, you fail even to find where to go. (Amake Elinat C2)

In cases such as in the quote above, gender knowledge seem to be helpful because women will have information on how to solve problems related to property grabbing when a husband dies. In this case, the construction of gender roles is not dependent on men or husbands but instead on circumstances such as the above. The way women construct gender roles may not be static but bound to change depending on the circumstances the affected women find themselves in. This simply shows that the participating women's construction of their gender roles is circumstantial as they just act to respond to the situations they find themselves in.

However, the interpretation and construction of gender is something that the participating women seem not to clearly understand. The participants seem to believe that gender is more about sharing the house chores than anything else. When it comes to the issue of both women and men joining the labour market to contribute to the income of the household, they seem to agree that both men and women should bring an income into a home. Some participants accepted that they could also bring an income to the

home, but that did not mean that they should abandon their submissive roles: In this regard, a participant mentioned that:

> Yes it is part of our culture. For example, even in situations where a woman is also working like a man. It has to be different between the two, a woman needs to wake up early in the morning, warm water for the man to bath and prepare breakfast for him because it is part of our culture. Not what this gender is bringing. After work I should again rush home and go and cook again for my husband. I shouldn't wait for my husband to do the house chores. I need to wash baby nappies that I left in the morning before going for work. I have to do this because I'm not educated and cannot have a maid like our friends who are educated, if I do that my husband can be annoyed with me (Chimbamilonga C2)

The above quote is a clear testimony to Scott`s (2006) observation among the rural women in Zambia that, despite both women and men going out for work, when they come home, a woman continues to the house work while a man sits and waits for food; to be prepared by the wife. It is such cases that demonstrate that the men have power even when they seem to perform the same roles as the women who took part in the study, such as going out to work. This is related to what has been earlier mentioned that for some women, their men are the only available means of sustaining their lives and the lives of their children. The women who took part in this study seem to take this view of women and men's roles because they have to maintain the institution of marriage. The biggest fear the women have is to lose their marriage and remain unmarried if they concentrate too much on this gender knowledge. The significance of marriage in rural areas and how gender is constructed in marriages is discussed in the next sub-chapter.

5.1.3   The significance of marriage in the rural areas

For a rural woman in Zambia, marriage is central to womanhood in particular and to the wider society in general. As indicated earlier in the chapter, a married woman commands a lot of respect compared to a woman who is single and is of what is considered to be marriageable age. For this reason, marriage is highly sought after in Zambia, every woman in the rural area that has come of age looks forward to be married. Actually, marriage is looked at as emancipation out of problems, especially economic problems. In these marriages men seem to command power, as Mwansa

(2011) notes, men in most Zambian marriages have more power than women because they are men. Men have power in everything, be it in the home or in society at large. The women seem to be content with that. As mentioned earlier, there is a disparity between men and women in rural Zambia when it concerns power relations, men always have the upper hand where power is concerned. However, the kind of power that men possess in rural areas is due to how they have been raised by their parents. When a boy is born, he is nurtured and socialized in such a way that he learns what he should do or not do to live as a boy. Meanwhile, girls are also raised to live as their immediate society expects of them to live. It is for this reason that the construction of gender among the research participants seem to be more fixed than flexible, because of their upbringing.

Generally, marriages in rural areas seem to be based on custom and tradition. A man has to pay `bride price` to the wife's family called, *lobola* (Dodoo, 1998). Women are often pushed to submit to the common norms for all women. My findings show that most of the marriages in the area where I conducted my research are under customary law; Bennet (2004) writes that customary laws are accepted as obligatory in most communities where it is practiced. These laws seem to sustain the subordination of women to men. Since most of these laws are unwritten, it is difficult then for people to argue whether they are just or unjust. (However, the question is: why do women give the impression that they abide by these laws, even when submission to men does not seem to add anything good to their lives. Iam tempted to deduce here that this is more to do with the social practices these women get socialized into in the early stages of their lives as future women under local customary laws. Bennet (2004:1) writes that "Customary laws derive from social practices that the community concerned accepts as obligatory…. Normative system of this nature is never directly accessible to the outsider". Considering this argument, I can say that especially as an outsider, it is not an easy task to find the right answer to the question posed above. Below is a quote from one participant who was asked if she had changed her view of marriage after she got new knowledge on gender matters:

> Yes I believe it can't work, may be to others, but not me! Because I can just lose my marriage! Because this gender is not good, other women now cannot even go and cook for their own children simply because they know that men are there to cook. You find that when they go out, they go for good; they don't consider their husbands to be worthy anymore. They cannot even take care of their own children. (Amai Mangani C1)

In the above quote, the participant expressed an absolute fear of losing her marriage. She is scared that having gender knowledge increases the risk of her marriage coming to an end. As a result, nourishing and maintaining their marriages preoccupies the mind of these women at the expense of other important issues, such as educating themselves or going to the women's clubs established by NGOs and working towards self-reliance. Having this fear of losing a marriage could have a huge impact on how marriage relationships are perceived and lived out. Since women are the ones who are so keen in maintaining this status, they are bound to submit to almost anything that a man would ask for. In addition, since marriages provide economic refuge, as observed above, then a woman could find herself thrown into abject poverty if she left the institution of marriage. This may be the reason why future brides are always groomed to be good servants to their husbands (and responsible for child care).The bottom line is that, marriage brings economic gains, dignity and respect to a woman. When a girl gets married or is married off[8], it means that the family will spend less on things such as food and school fees. In turn, the married girl is expected to help her siblings and her parents through the resources that she gains from the marriage through the provisions of her husband.

Most participants in this study think that gender knowledge has brought more harm than good to most marriages and they would rather retain their traditional ways, such as satisfying their men at all costs and keeping their marriage status. However, it is tempting to conclude here that these women do this because at times they have no option and no real capacity to look after themselves. They would rather be in a union with men as their shields and sole bread winners. That is why being in these marriages does not indicate that these women are happy. To me, this seems just a way of abiding by the social norms and obligations, and as a result, getting into what I would term a

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[8] Some poor families prefers their children to be married off against the child's wish so as to reduce the burden of supporting child and instead anticipate to receiving alms from her marriage back to the parents: school/college going children equally becomes victims of this scenario

marriage of convenience. In other situations, some women seem to not be comfortable being married, but are in it just to keep up appearances and to meet the expectations of society. This can lead to men having endless power over women, and women are left without options regarding whether to be submissive in their marriages or to live on their own. If they choose to live without husbands, then they may not find food and other daily needs, because men are the ones who are economically productive and bring an income into the home and to the wider family.

I support the view that if a woman left her marriage, it may lead her to realize the potential that lies within her. This is the potential to do things or survive on her own without really depending on her husbands or other men. The research findings show that some women have actually become conscious of other alternatives to life other than just marriage. These are alternatives such as setting up a business, but they do not seem to be aware of how they would execute such ideas, as one participant said:

> Women have a lot of problems because they are under the power of men. I can't rule over a man because he is empowered by a job. So we join such organizations like this one in order to find help that we cannot find in the homes from our husbands. Sometimes we feel like starting businesses such as selling something like clothes so that we stop depending on these marriages. If I had my own money I would do something of my own so that I keep my children even when am not married. (Mai Elinati C2)

In other words, if the women had options other than marriage for survival then they would be empowered. Grobakken (2006:207) argues that "empowerment therefore, signifies a change in a person's range of life-influencing choices, and women are in particularly vulnerable and disempowered group". If empowerment signifies change in a person's choices as Grobakken (2006) suggests, then there is a chance that the affected women could learn other survival skills to avoid over dependency on men and marriage. My view is that if the affected women remain by themselves, then they could find that they have the urge to do what are supposedly men's roles such as productively working in order to bring an income to the family.

Women in the marriages being discussed here are expected to abide by certain customs in order for the marriage to keep going, and for them to remain custodians of tradition.,

for example women are supposed to do all the house chores and take care of their men. However, more often than not, these customs seem to be harder on women than on men because society heaps a huge responsibility on women (and not on men) for preserving certain traditions. For example, in a marriage, husbands are traditionally heads of families and makes household decisions. This is mainly due to the fact that men pay *lobola* (bride price) to the woman's family before they marry. When the *lobola* is paid, a man may feel ownership of the woman, and solely responsible for making household decisions that suit his priorities and are not necessarily inclusive of the wife's priorities.

This state of affairs could be contributing to the increase of HIV/AIDS cases in Zambian rural areas. Having a lot of power and a feeling of being decision makers may lead to men having multiple sexual partners because women are vulnerable. This suggestion is supported by Mwansa (2011) who claims that male dominance in some African cultures is a factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS, because women cannot negotiate safer sex due to their vulnerability. If women cannot negotiate safer sex, many of them will be exposed and continue facing a high risk of infection. This is because if the affected women attempted to negotiate sex in their marriages, they risk being left by their husbands, who would replace them with a more vulnerable and willing woman. During an interview, one participant narrated how her husband treated her in discussions about sexual intimacy:

> My husband does not want me to use contraceptives. I have two children, a boy and a girl and they are both staying with my mother because my husband doesn't buy food for them. My fear is that they will die of hunger if they stayed with me and my husband. When he gets his monthly salary from his work, he uses it all on beer. When he comes home from beer drinking, he then expects to find food that he doesn't provide. I decided to go to the clinic to get contraceptives so I don't become pregnant again. One day he found out that I was taking contraceptives, he beat me and threw them away. He told me that I need to be pregnant so that other men should not admire me because he owned me. I have been troubled a lot in this marriage that I decided to find a job as a house maid but my husband went to my boss and told her that I cannot work for her anymore because I needed to take care of my home and not someone else's. So I don't even know what to do now, I always go and eat from my mother every time. (Amai Dailesi C2)

Such testimonies indicate how difficult it is for some women to negotiate their own sexual autonomy. The statement shows how much men want to be in control of almost

everything, including sexuality, which both men and women should have equal freedom to determine. My conclusion here is that if women continue to have little control over their sexuality, then they are likely to remain vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Thomas and Overbaugh (2000) observe that the social determinants of women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS are gender disparities, poverty, and lack of classroom education, sexual norms and culture. As the narrative above shows, some of the men in the research sites seem to have great authority, even in situations where they cannot provide for their women and their families. The men in the research area could be said to have a fear of the unknown: if women became empowered then they could stand to lose their authority. As the research participant testified, some men have a strong feeling that if their wives are not pregnant then they may be able to attract other men. Equally, some men feel that when their wives engage in formal employment in order to gain their own or family income, their power will probably be curtailed or diminished. In this situation, men try by all means to maintain their authority by hindering women's attempts to get jobs or deciding how they should live their sexuality, as in the case of Amai Dailesi above.

5.2   NGO definitions of gender in Zambia

The local NGOs define gender roles through their discourses. This is usually done by directly reaching out to the target groups or through different mediums such as print and electronic media. Generally in Zambia, the media is one of the platforms on which gender related issues are discussed and disseminated at individual, community and national levels. However, the most widely utilised source of information in rural areas is radio and television (TV), despite the fact that most locals do not have adequate resources to own either. Mills (2007) views discourse theory as a language which communicates a meaning in a particular context. My findings show that NGOs working with women's issues seem to have a totally different reference point from the way these women in the study understand their own contextual realities. One NGO expressed how it tries to fight certain cultural practices that it deems harmful to women's lives:

> There are cultural things that hinder the progress and development, so you find that
> there are certain cultures where a woman is pregnant, they say don't eat an egg, and you

know an egg is a source of nutrition even to unborn child, so those are some of cultures, we are saying, let us do away with. Some of these cultures that are stepping on the rights and development of women … You find that in certain cultures, some of the cultures are good and some are not good. We are trying to strike a balance that lets get rid of these cultures that are not good, for example, men seem to have power over most of the women in Zambia … So we are trying to discourage those beliefs … Those are the issues that we are fighting against... we have managed to record some success because now we have so many women coming up to say we have been victim of violence, we are moving, so we still have resistance because this woman is not economically empowered, so what does she do is to leave this dangerous husband, you know this is very sad, this is what we are saying that once we economically empower a woman, you are economically empowering society because that woman will not be on the receiving end when it comes to punches and kicks. (NGO 1)

The language that NGOs communicate seems to point to the women's way of living as not meeting some standards set by certain authorities outside of their communities. However, the NGOs do not seem to be making clear what kind of standards should define gender roles or to which extent are certain cultural practices are `good` or `bad`. It is not clear which reference they are using to determine what constitutes `good culture`. In addition, the NGOs seem to be lacking appropriate methods for eradicating what they purport to be 'bad' culture amongst the rural women. This is in line with what Shutt (2009) observed, that the NGOs lack clarity about the changes they seek to achieve and the means of achieving change. Eliminating what the NGOs perceive to be negative in the women's lives, may entail taking away something the affected women do not mind maintaining, for the sake of harmony and cultural continuity. For these NGOs to be able to create change, then they need to have an understanding of the context in which they seek change. My findings also show that NGOs are trying to bring development through empowering women.

5.3   Empowerment

The information gathered during this study shows that the NGOs sometimes use money as a way of empowering the women, in the name of development. NGOs working on women's issues encourage women to form groups in rural areas, and they give the women money to start projects so that they can make a profit to sustain their living at the end of the day.

> We were taught how to manage groups and how to handle problems; we were told that when we have problems, we take them to the groups. They were helping us through talking. We are also given money as groups to start projects. For us we were given money to buy chicks so we could raise chicken but when we sold the chicken we couldn't see the money. The people in the forefront and with education got it (Amake Limbikani C1)

The giving of money to groups by the NGOs is both positive and negative. I view this practice as negative because it is not giving a clear on how women are to sustain their empowerment, as in the example above. The giving of money may not make women change their attitudes or gain an understanding of gender relations. For example, it is not clear how women will change their submissive roles by simply being given money. Women in the rural area of the Eastern province of Zambia do not view themselves as active contributors to their own personal and to their community's collective development. Most of them seem to think that someone needs to give them resources such as money for them to develop. For most of them, development means NGOs coming to give them some handouts to form clubs or to start a business venture.

As Clair (2006) argues, development is not only about economic change but it includes other forms of social transformation. There may not be development if the profit realized out of projects such as the rearing of chicken is not properly accounted for. The quote above suggests that profits made from businesses that were started with funds from the NGOs are not equitably shared between all of the women in the group.

Another impediment to development is that some NGOs working in the target areas are in the habit of putting personal gains first, at the expense of development. The NGOs working for women keep on changing their agendas and plans for people in rural areas. One informant said that these NGOs shift focus depending on what interests them, for example today they may come advocating women rights, and the next time the same people will come in the name of spearheading education or other things, so their agendas do not seem to be fixed.

> I'm saying that there is no benefit because when they come, they teach us sometimes to write but we don't see anything because when they go, they go for good. Next time they come they bring different agenda. The money they bring   goes straight in the hands of the educated ones. (Amai Busa C1)

If the significance of women's empowerment has to be denied by change, then women's change of status in a positive way will contribute to development. This is because; sidelining women in the process of development may result in them living in perpetual poverty. Empowerment should lead to significant change in women's lives; the whole idea is to make women come out of poverty and lead a `better life`. The empowering must lead to some continuous good life. However, my findings show that empowerment in this area does not succeed. It seems the empowering done by NGOs working with women in rural areas is short term, and it does not yield the so called development. The NGOs do not seem to perform checks and balances on the question of why poor women remain poor and dependent on men even after they have received knowledge about empowerment. When asked how she felt about this shift of agendas by NGOs, this participant said:

> We had to ask them that this was too much because we couldn't see any help from this NGO. They couldn't give us any convincing answer, they only said, us we are just sent. So this makes us not to have confidence in the NGOs, no matter what knowledge they bring, be it education or gender, we don't benefit in anyway. They make us write a lot of things by filling in their forms. You see there is nothing that we see from NGOs (Amai Elinat C2)

However, some of the women still have much trust and confidence in the NGOs attempts to foster development. They seem to believe that by following the objectives that are set by the NGOs; they will easily contribute to development. "Yes I can say that NGOs help, they are making us women wake up in a way, we are now able to act in a way we could not before we could get their knowledge". (Amai Magi C2)

The appreciation of NGOs contributions to development from (Amai magi C2) for example, makes some women depend on NGOs because they are able to see the positive outcomes. This may be likened to Cornwall's (2007) argument that one can only understand the meanings of development if one puts them into use or practice. The woman in the above quote seems to make use of the knowledge that she gets and puts it into practice, though Thomas (2000) has argued that it is not easy to tell whether

development has been achieved or even whether it is achievable. If it is not easy to tell whether development has been achieved, then Thomas and Cornwall contradict each other.

However, grounding the argument through empowerment, Thomas (2000) further shows that empowerment may be a necessary process to get out of under-development. It seems there is a link between under-development and disempowerment, because under-development which is a recipe for poverty, according to Wright (1994), is a by-product of social causes, hence, "empowerment is both a dimension of poverty and one of the weapons with which to fight it" (Grobakken 2006:207). That is why empowerment cannot be complete or objectively implemented without a focus on the causes of disempowerment. Malowa compound as a research area is a good case for this argument because it brings into view, women that are seemingly disempowered by social causes with a number of them willing to be re/empowered by different means. However, the necessary empowerment should not only be seen through the lenses of the NGOs that are claiming to be empowering the poor women of Malowa compound. The findings clearly show that even if most women have the zeal to be empowered, it is not only through distant cultures they will get what they want but also through local knowledge and resources. In fact the NGOs that are trying to empower the affected women should be very cautious of the impact of their work. This is because their fight to empower women by just using their discourse and their distant frames of references may end up disempowering women who could have been empowered with the use of a different approach. The work of the Brazilian educational philosopher Paulo Freire positions empowerment as being a process of consciousness-raising through dialogue, action and critical reflection in interaction with others concerning certain barriers, norms and institutions which cause processes of disempowerment. Freires work has received a good deal of appreciation within non-western perspectives, particularly in under- served communities and communities of social deprivation (Freire, 1976).

5.4   The role of money and other basic material possessions in constructing gender

Money and basic material possessions seem to play a big role in determining the construction of gender roles in the rural areas where this study was conducted. Some

literature has shown the dynamics and challenges that come with resource acquisition such as money and other basic material possessions within the family, and how this affects the construction of gender roles. Traditionally, money matters are seen as the province of men, who in turn delegates to their women how the money is to be used in the home. In this regard, money determines the gender roles because the man as the sole money earner, he makes important decisions, while the woman remains with the secondary ones. One participant said that: - "It is difficult to make decisions ngati siusebenza [when you are not working], you just have to listen to what your husband is saying because he is the one who looks after the family by bringing in family income" (Amake Limbikani C1) .On a different note among all the participants in the study, only one woman got involved in financial decisions in the home. Amake Junior (C1) for example revealed that:

> in my home, I make almost all of the financial decisions because my husband is not very interested, I have tried to get him interested in the financial faze we are going through with the help of the NGO, but he doesn't. Sometimes I also contribute to the income of the house when I sell tomatoes.

The involvement of women into money matters could be attributed to the fact that they are actually themselves earning a bigger part of the money for their families. As already mentioned, Iam of the view that when women gets empowered and start getting money and other basic material possessions, this changes the opinion they had of themselves. This standpoint, although it is just among insignificant participants in Malowa compound actually challenges the already reported WID, WAD, and GAD views that tend to see third world women as static and unchanging in their culture. Third world women are "homogenised" and treated as victims of their own cultures. It has been argued that the three approaches make ethnocentric assumptions about relations between men and women in different societies, seeing only exploitation, subordination and conflict rather than cooperation and the importance of family bonds. (Bhavnani et al 2003).

However, the majority of the participants are still lacking money and basic material needs despite involving themselves with various NGOs. Most of them are married to

men who have no formal employment. This has its own consequences on gender inequalities as women continue living in poverty cutting across gender.

5.4.1 *Poverty*

There are a lot of definitions of poverty. According to Chant (2007:31) "poverty has long been open to different definitions, tools of measurement, and modes of representation." Poverty is a relative term depending on how it is referenced and used. In this study when I refer to rural women as poor, I mean women who have been deprived of gender equality. They are lacking certain basic needs such as, jobs, money and many other things due to the unequal relations in which they find themselves. So the meaning of poverty in this study is not a general definition of how poverty has been defined by other scholars.

Chant (2007), has the same view as Grobakken (2006), that the feminisation of poverty as a term is not only responsible for drawing attention to the number of women living in poverty but also it calls for women to be recognized in the process of development. My findings to a certain extent revealed that poverty eradication amongst these women is not easy. The NGOs working on women's issues are trying to assist women with finances, mostly in groups, as a way of eradicating poverty. They provide finances to women's groups for them to begin ventures that will generate funds. The women in turn involve themselves in activities that will bring profit and develop their community. As mentioned above, the giving of finances to groups is questionable. How an individual benefits is something that is not clear from the way the business is run. If finances are given to individuals, it could go some way towards eradicating poverty in the families that are affected. In the study, women expressed ignorance about how the money is used when they create such businesses; they claimed the leaders in the groups decide what to do with the money since they deal with women who are not educated and cannot ask if things go wrong. At the end of the day, this was seen to be just an activity for women provided by NGOs, rather than really an activity that is initiated to eradicate poverty. This is why Shutt (2009) argues that NGOs should have a clear picture of social-economic processes; development should start with an individual's mind, rather than with financing a group. One NGO I interviewed indicated that they assist women with money in groups and not as individuals:

Yes we have, we have women groups, where we do the sensitization, and after all these activities, we empower the rural areas with, goat rearing, poultry to enable them to sustain their lives, so that they can come out from the poverty they are experiencing. We empower the women though we don't empower individually, they have to form a club, through a club, we give them funds, after that they share, the remains of the money in the club is transferred to another club which is revolving in the same area. When one group graduates, it passes on to another group, so that every member of the groups can have an income at the end of the day. (NGO 3)

The reason why money should be given to individuals and not groups is that group behavior is mostly regulated by the norms and rules that are laid down for the benefit of the group. This is in line with what Banik (2010:13) in (Else Øyen 2004,305) argue: "one way ahead in understanding the complexities of poverty formation may be to look closer at those actions and the actors involved in the process who actually benefit from continued high levels of poverty". From the findings, it does not seem clear how the women benefit from the business and which criteria are used to see that women are really helped.

Other findings indicate that even when these women are empowered by NGOs, the change is not noticed; sometimes, it seems the NGOs have failed to work on what really constitutes poverty in the rural women's lives, and they do not seem to have examined what makes the poor women in question remain poor, even after the empowering process. On the other hand, the women's attitudes in rural areas have also contributed to the high poverty levels amongst themselves. They seem to believe that their lived experiences cannot be changed; they seem to fear change simply because they do not want to be labeled as wanting to live like city women or as westerners. They want to live the way their mothers lived in order to maintain a certain culture of being appreciated as well-mannered women according to their cultural setting. Being appreciated as a woman who follows `acceptable' local culture is what preoccupies rural women. They do not value their own development as individuals, for them what is important is to maintain a certain cultural stance, so that they are appreciated, most especially by men. The women seem to think that they are not capable of turning around the table of culture; they mostly adhere to this kind of culture simply for survival. These same attitudes seem to be passed on to girl children from generation to generation. This

scenario seems to demand actions and actors involved in the process of development to be analysed, just as Banik (2010) argues as reported earlier.

Grobakken (2006) suggests that poverty is gendered, and that women are over-represented within the poverty group. Poverty intertwined with other inequalities is clearly noticeable in the lives of women. Most women do not seem to have an income of their own, they depend on their husbands. Most men are breadwinners and sometimes the role of a breadwinner is abused, and they also fail to meet the demands of their homes. This poverty amongst rural women may also be the reason for their subordinated role in relation to men. Women seem to perpetually live in poverty because they may not be able to challenge their breadwinners. The findings in my study show that more women are really living in poverty than men, due to many factors such as education; rural women's lack of education as the sub-chapter explores below.

5.4.2   Education

Rural women are most affected because the rural areas are where educational levels are very low because schools are in distant places, causing girls to drop out at an early stage because of the distance and security issues. This situation could have some direct repercussions, for example, some development initiatives that need some basic formal education to implement could not take place because the target group cannot easily comprehend or implement them.

Education seems to be one of the major things that the rural women are lacking. Most of the women do not have formal education, and this has contributed to them not understanding gender-related issues. Illiteracy is very high amongst women in rural areas, and they do not seem to understand what can contribute to a better life simply because they lack formal education. Rural women do not seem to think that having gender knowledge could benefit their lives. They relate gender to people with education and believe that it has nothing to do with those who have little or no education.

However, in certain instances some women seem to accept that certain cultures that they cling to should be changed, for example, the prioritising of a boy child over a girl child when it comes to deciding who should go to school as one participant said:

No I'm not agreeing to that and I'm against those parents who are doing that, as I   have already said that to be uneducated is not good, mostly us who are not educated, we are in the forefront telling girl children to be married more than those who are educated, so education is really important because people who have gone to school cannot do that because they know that they are hindering the future of a girl child. You are blocking her future, who knows; maybe she will be the president of tomorrow. As we can hear now that there are women presidents' nowadays. If we do that ndiyekuti tiononga dziko (we are doing harm to the country). If we continue doing that then it means that the girl will be mistreated even when she gets married. (Amai Busa C1).

In rural areas most parents prefer boys to go to school than girls. There is a strong belief that girls will get married and be looked after by their husbands even if they have not been to a formal school. Generally, rural societies groom girls as future wives, and some families marry girls off at a tender age to lessen the economic burden of the family. The belief is that marriage brings economic gains to the family, as well as dignity and respect to a woman. However, the quote above shows that some rural women see the benefit of educating a girl child.

When it comes to HIV/AIDS infections, it may be deduced that the lack of education may increase women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection, compared to men. Having an education enables women to make informed decisions about safer sex. Jukes et al (2008) indicate that educated women are more likely to access information on prevention than the uneducated. Women who lack education may find it difficult to negotiate safer sex, especially married women, because they may fear the ending of their marriage as a consequence.

The globalisation of education and development has a great impact on poor countries like Zambia, especially in the rural areas, which have a bigger percentage of people lacking formal education, especially amongst the poorest women in rural areas. This has led people to abandon their traditional way of educating children, (like elders teaching them good morals and skills such as farming or hunting to sustain their living), and concentrate only on classroom education, mainly spearheaded by NGOs. We might, therefore, conclude that the discourses that non-governmental organisations are imparting to women in the rural areas of Zambia may contradict their way of life and may be more relevant to women with formal education. Women with formal education

may understand the gender discourses from NGOs more easily than the uneducated poor women because the two groups are exposed to very different ways of life.

However, the aforementioned scenario contradicts to the realities observed in the research area, because it seemed that the NGO target women with limited or no formal education at all. According to the NGOs, women with limited or no formal education are top priority on the list of target groups because they are said to be vulnerable to poverty and disempowerment. The implication to such kind of scenario is that target groups with limited or no formal education are easily influenced and quickly accept new ideas. The assumption may be that the women without formal education may be doing so without making informed decisions (because of limited formal education) unlike those that have obtained some significant classroom education.

The NGOs have added value in supporting education in Malowa compound especially, the education of girls. The government of Zambia has one public school in the area, so the residents of this community have to look for alternatives which are community schools with the support of various NGOs. Children attend these schools without paying any school fees, and it is a better alternative to government schools with limited number of places. This seems to be a positive initiative, especially for people who do not send girl children to school because they lack money. Against this background, it is likely that the NGOs that have come in to fill the gap left by the government to establish schools equally have to protect their `interests` in terms of objectives. This is because NGOs are engaged in a wide range of activities, which include projects relating to the delivery of health, education, human rights and the provision of emergency relief (Borchgrevink, 2006). However, it is likely that the NGO discourses are manifest in either the administration of these schools or in the curriculum, which does not necessarily come from the governments' formal education system. Although the schools may be small and following to their own curriculum, the levels of influence on the wider society may be quite extensive. The diagram below shows how the NGO discourse can influence the community through school support. Malowa community lacks basic needs such as education, when these needs are met through discourse and support from the NGOs, then Malowa community utilises the schools directly supported by NGOs. The outcome of the knowledge from these schools reflects the NGOs input in the lives of the people of Malowa community.

Fig 3: Influence of NGO supported schools to the wider community

The NGO supported
school (Curriculum)

NGO input
(discourse, support)

Malowa Compound
(basic Needs)

Regina Mwansa 2013
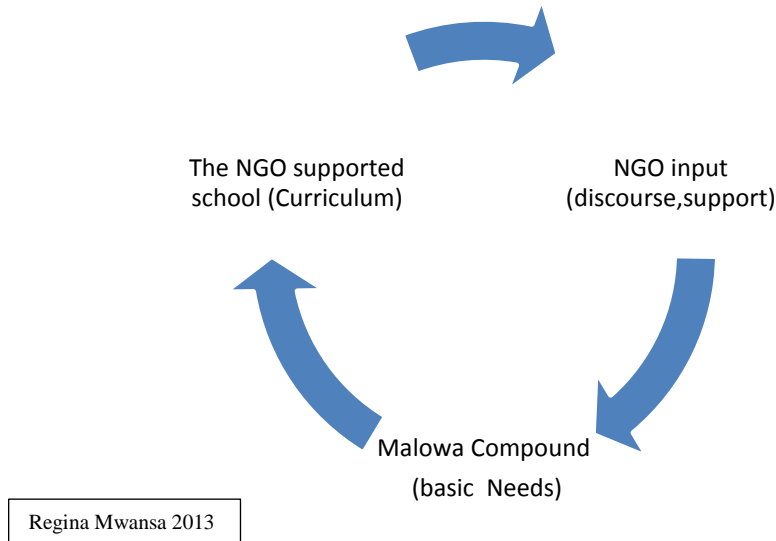
5.5   Relationship between the research participants and NGOs

The research participants expressed differing views on the arrival of NGOs in their lives; some participants were happy with the contributions that NGOs made to their lives. The many different and differently named organizations all claim to be there to help women in one way or the other. They also have different objectives and agendas, which are supposedly to help women out of their current situation. It could be argued that when different NGOs have different ways of operating, the differences may help to cater to all of the different needs of the women, but at the same time, the differences between the organisations may serve the interest of the organizations more than the women they are there to help. Shutt (2009) argues that NGOs are likely to have different ideas of how change is achieved and how to go about change. In this study, it was found that the organizations have different agendas, for example, one organization may come today in the name of empowering women, and then tomorrow the same organization will change its agenda to helping children start school. This is something that may make the local people not trust the NGOs. Women claimed they could not trust such organisations, which come and go without completing their agenda, and bring different new ideas time and time again. In addition, the research participants told me that often it is the same people running the organisations that constantly change their name and

focus. So if people see the same person changing the names of their organisation, then they lose trust and confidence in that person/organisation. Some women expressed skepticism about trusting the NGOs because they come with different agendas. Some participants are not sure what the NGOs are really trying to achieve and how they aim to help them.

The NGOs have helped women to understand that they have potential to know about their rights. Until the arrival of the NGOs, women in rural areas did not seem to know about their rights. They are able to compare their lives now and their lives before they were exposed to the knowledge brought by the NGOs. Some women have benefitted in many ways from gender equality initiatives, including increased access to adult education, learning skills such as sewing and knitting. It seems they have become aware of what it means to have a better life and to contribute to development. Though there is no clear definition of development, as Cornwall (2007:471) states: "Words make worlds. The language of development defines worlds-in-the-making, animating and justifying intervention in currently existing worlds with fulsome promises of the possible". The goal of the NGOs is to foster development in the way they think development should be.

Gaining knowledge from the organisations working with women seems to have led poor women to understanding the issues relating to gender equality; they seem to be pleased that the knowledge being imparted in their lives is beneficial to their development. In certain cases, though rarely, women feel able to report to cases of abuse by their spouses to the authorities. It has also helped them to share the knowledge of gender equality with their spouses, though this is widely received with mixed feelings by most of their spouses. Very few men in rural areas would genuinely understand and accept the issue of equality. One NGO participant had this to say when asked about men's reactions to gender knowledge:

> There are certain exceptional situations where we have heard that women are trying to take all the positions because they have gender knowledge... Actually even in the meetings that we have, We train women and men in gender knowledge, but we always receive, especially from men that we are promoting women to be above them , so that is the danger,. (NGO 1)

This kind of opposition from the men forces NGOs to analyse the way they distribute knowledge. NGOs should also try to impart gender knowledge to men, so that they understand and change their attitude towards women.

The objectives and goals of most of these NGOs are to improve the livelihood of women by providing them with the knowledge and skills that are useful in their lives. In this study, the women in rural Zambia who were interviewed are vulnerable individuals who require assistance to get out of their situation of vulnerability. According to my findings, women's vulnerability is one of the main topics for awareness-raising by the NGOs.

5.5.1 Power Relations

The findings in this study show that there is overwhelming evidence of power relationship at play especially, between the participants on one hand and the NGOs on the other. The women that participated in the study showed signs of powerlessness mostly because of the lack of their own resources, so they are bound to accept the offers and the knowledge from NGOs without really questioning their power. When it comes to NGOs, they exercise their power through the resources that they have, such as money. Money in itself equates power over the poor women because it is one of the things that they lack.

Sometimes the discourses of the NGOs seem to be more powerful because they are aimed at abolishing the already existing gender discourses of poor rural women. This actually means that, the NGO working with women have adopted a discourse that can be viewed as superior over to the local discourses. On another level, NGOs seem to be under some authorities that exercise power over them, especially their funders that give them money for women's projects. This could be the reason why NGOs keep on changing the agenda for the work that they do. As already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, when asked how she felt about this shift of agendas by NGOs, one participant said: "…We had to ask them that this was too much because we couldn't see any help from this NGO. They couldn't give us any convincing answer, they only said, us we are just sent…" (Amai Elinat C2)

What Amai Elinat expressed by quoting the answer *"...us we are just sent..."* from a member of an NGO, gives an impression that the NGOs basically do what they are told by some source of power somewhere. It may seem that, it could be their funders who tell them what to do, however, the findings from this study do not demonstrate this conclusively.

 It was mentioned in the interviews that NGOs are funded by external funders who designs the programs to be carried out at a specific time and place. The distribution of the NGOs resources actually standardises and shapes how development is done (Sidaway, 2008). However, this study did not go further into inquiring about the funders of the NGOs that participated in this study.

On the other hand, the local rural women also have their own power, and they show their power by clinging to their traditional gender discourses, and opposing the NGO discourses. These women want to exercise power by embracing and appreciating their own cultural norms and ways of living. They completely reject the knowledge and gender discourses brought by NGOs in preference for indigenous knowledge, they seem not to appreciate anything that they perceive as `foreign`. This has resulted in NGOs failing to meaningfully penetrate the women's lives. Both the NGOs and the women have power, which they fail to negotiate. In this regard, power is viewed to exist in common people in their everyday lives despite other social challenges. This includes the context within which the target women in Malowa compound experience life and appear to be powerless. The individuals who took part in this research have the potential to change, especially at the micro-level, to resist the seemingly powerful dominant force of discourses (Foucault, 1983). That is why, according to Foucault (1978), power is organized and carried out through discourse. As such the local discourses in Malowa compound may be more powerful than the NGOs discourses. In view of the foregoing and as already alluded to in chapter 1, discourse here refers to conversations, spoken or written, about ideas and knowledge that are relayed in the local cultural landscape of understanding realities (Dionigi, 2004). Nevertheless, when power is viewed as something instituted and conveyed through discourses (Foucault, 1983) it is likely that resistance to power is usually a possibility, partly because counter discourses can be developed, producing completely new types of knowledge leading to new sources and capillaries of power (Ramazanoglu, 1993).

On another level, this difference in power relations leaves some women with no option but to embrace both: using part of the NGOs discourses while holding onto their traditional discourses as well. These kinds of women use NGO discourses for economic gains, especially when the NGO projects involve empowering them through money lending. On the other hand, they hold on to their traditional discourses in order to live like others in the community, both discourses seem to be beneficial to their lives.

5.6   Chapter Conclusion

The chapter explored the findings of the study. It shows that gender is understood differently by rural women, and is constructed by maintaining distinctive sex roles. This can be seen in relation to the women's views about marriage and religion, and through their lived experiences. The chapter has also explored how NGOs implement projects aimed at women's empowerment, through education and poverty reduction and eradication.

6 Conclusion of the study

Development and progress on gender equality is very much dependent on context. In this Chapter, I present the conclusion, limitations and recommendations of the study. The study set out to explore the influences of NGO gender discourses on rural women living in the Eastern Province of Zambia. The study has also sought to explore the dominant social conditions and practices that shape the daily livelihoods of the participants in relation to `outside` discourses. To undertake this study the development and discourse theories were used in order to examine how the above two conceptual perspectives (NGO and participants local discourses) contradict or engage each other at different levels in the participant`s ways of life.

The study sought to answer the following questions:

6.1   Question 1

How do local people in Zambia's eastern province define gender roles and what are their frames of reference?

Firstly, the construction of gender can be traced in marriages, religion and in the participant's experiences as women. Marriages define who they are as women. A woman who is married is respected by the community and she is expected to have distinct roles according to her status.

Secondly, most of the construction of gender in rural areas is done in relation to a man. Men are respected in their society which has resulted in women's continuously being in a subordinate position. However, it is not clear if women really enjoy these subordinate positions because the study did not show how happy or unhappy they are about their subordinate roles as women.

It is also interesting to note that, not only lived experiences enable women to define their roles, Christianity influenced the way women define and construct gender roles and identity.

6.2 Question 2

How are gender roles defined by NGOs in Zambia?

Gender roles are defined through discourses which seem to be `foreign` to the women. The women in the study have their own frames of reference that define their roles in the community. The contextual realities of women are side lined by the NGOs. Therefore, incompatible gender discourses emerge.

6.3 Question 3

What role does lack of money and basic material possessions play in determining gender roles in the affected communities?

Poverty has continued to perpetuate gender inequality in the rural areas. Women are deprived of income; as a result they cannot obtain the resources that they need to sustain their lives. Lack of education and jobs are key factors that have always determined the role that a woman plays in the community where the research was done.

6.4 Question 4

What is the relationship between the lived experiences of the research participants and NGO discourses on gender?

Firstly, there is a power relationship at play between NGOs and the women involved in the study. The NGOs and the women had some measure of power. NGOs sometimes use money in the name of empowerment and as a way of making women abide by their discourses on gender. Women on the other hand, show their power by not accepting to the NGOs gender discourses and maintaining their own local practices when it comes to women's roles in their community.

Secondly, some women seem to have seen the benefit of using the NGO discourses about gender. They have been enlightened about their rights and taught skills for self-

reliance. However, some women think the same NGO gender discourses have destabilised the way of living that they have always treasured.

Lastly, the NGOs working with women in the study are not consistent in the way they deliver their services to the people. Their agenda is not defined or fixed according to the needs or priorities of the people they are trying to empower, For example, the affected women do not really trust the NGOs due to the frequent changes in their agendas. Sometimes the NGOs come with the aim of sensitizing women about their rights, another time; they will work on advancing another agenda such as education, and so on and so forth. This has resulted in the local community not trusting them. NGOs keep on changing agendas to suit their interests and not those of the people they want to empower.

6.5   Limitations

This study was conducted with a limited number of people in the Eastern Province of Zambia, as indicated in chapter 3. Had it been carried out as a comparative study of many rural areas in Zambia, it could have given a broader perspective on NGOs influence on rural women in Zambia. Because of this limitation, it is therefore not possible to conclude that the findings of this study can be a general picture for all rural areas in Zambia.

6.6   Recommendations

In the view of the limitations discussed above, I recommend the following,

6.6.1 Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Should consider the following:

- Understand the contextual background of rural women before imposing discourses about gender

- Empowerment should be long term and not short term. For example, give women proper skills for survival rather than distributing money to them without imparting skills that can make them generate more money in a sustainable way.

- Have a specific agenda for the women in rural areas that is aligned with the specific context of rural women.

- Finish projects that are started, rather than leaving them unfinished and beginning different new projects.

- People working for the NGOs should aim to deliver their knowledge and resources for development to the deserving recipients without focusing on being beneficiaries themselves.

6.6.2   Poor rural women

- Women in rural areas need to be flexible in realising what can bring development to their lives, rather than just clinging to their cultures even when the cultures seem to be unfair to them.

- Dependency on men should be curtailed. Women need to make use of some NGO discourses on gender in order to make progress on creating a gender equal society.

- Rural women should encourage young girls to get an education rather than viewing them as future wives. If they do not educate girls then the inequality between men and women will persist.

6.7   Future studies

This study has revealed many issues surrounding NGOs working with women's issues and the people they work for. It would be useful for the study to be extended by other researchers; thus, I recommend that future studies should include research on the conditions that funders of the NGOs impose, in order for them to receive funding for the implementation of programmes among poor rural populations in particular and developing countries in general.

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Appendices

Appendix i: Interview guide 1 (NGOs)

1. What is your organization name and what do you do?
2. Does gender have a role in your organization?
3. What are your organization objectives towards gender?
4. Do you have specific target of women that you work with?
5. How do you reach out to the women in question?
6. What kind of knowledge do you give women?
7. Is the kind of knowledge you give compatible with their lived experience?
8. Do you acknowledge some cultural perspectives for the women that you work for?
9. Do you think the knowledge you give them has negative or positive sides to their lives?
10. Is it possible that you can mention what you may think are the negative or positive sides?
11. Is it possible to tell that the lives of women have improved due to the knowledge that they receive?
12. Do you disseminate information to all the women of Zambia or you have specific provinces that you go for?
13. Do you have specific information for women without formal education and those with higher education or is the information the same for everyone?
14. Do have programs for women in the rural areas? If so can you give an example?
15. Do you also work for the men?
16. What kind of situations do you help men. Are men helped just as women in your organization

Appendix ii: Interview guide 2 (Rural Women)

1. What is your name?
2. What kind of NGO is operating in your area?
3. What kind of messages do you get from these NGOs?
4. Do you think the message just for women or men?
5. Would you say that the message from these NGOs is helping you or not?
6. What kind of benefit are you getting from these NGOs?
7. Is the same message conflicting with your culture? If so how?
8. How are you combining the two?
9. Can you give me an example of how the NGO message conflict with your culture or how it is similar to your culture.
10. Would you say that the messages are helping in spearheading gender equality?
11. What else do you want to hear from these NGOs apart from the issue of gender equality?
12. Are men or women hindering the achievement of gender equality?
13. Can you give me examples in which men or women contribute or hinder the achievement of gender equality
14. Do you think there's a difference in which women and men receive messages?
15. What do you think is needed for women to be empowered? Is it the NGOs or other things?
16. What do you think NGOs should do in order to help women?