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Empowerment of women in local development decision making structures.
'*To empower a woman is to empower the nation,*'
The case of the Zambezi Valley, Zimbabwe

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Social inclusion, Gender and Rural Livelihoods

By

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Jeniffer, my daughter Pesilinda and my two sons Benjamin and Makanimeni.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACPD	African Community Publishing and Development
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CCJP	Catholic Commissions Justice and Peace
CSO	Central Statistics Office
GAD	Gender and Development
FGD	Focussed Group Discussions
HDR	Human Development Report
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RDC	Rural District Council
RDDC	Rural District Development Committee
SC (UK)	Save the Children (United Kingdom)
SDC	School Development Committee
SWOT	Strength, weakness, opportunity and threat
WARDCO	Ward Development Committee
WEP	Women Empowerment
WCD	World Commissions Dams
WHO	World Health Organisation
WID	Women in Development
WB	World Bank
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDEA	United Nations Development Economic Agency
UNHCR	United Nations Human and Cultural Rights
UNDAW	United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW**)**
UK	United Kingdom
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VIDCOs	Village Development Committees
ZHDR	Zimbabwe Human Development Report

ABSTRACT

Since the late 1950s when the Zambezi Valley communities were displaced after the construction of the Kariba dam to pave a way for the hydro electric scheme women have not received any attention for their quest to participate and access development decision making structures such as the VIDCO, WADCO and RDDC. An unequal distribution of power has persisted for years without any remedy to date. Furthermore, successive governments have continuously failed to acknowledge the cause of the women's plight. Mostly the Tonga women have been treated on an equal footing with any other women in the country, yet they have a unique history that requires some form of affirmative action. Much of the so-called 'development' aimed at empowering women in the 'resettlement' areas can be traced to sympathetic churches or development agencies rather than the government. Instead, Rural District Councils have implemented general development programmes, as directed by national policies, without really taking into consideration the empowerment of women through participation in local development decision making structures to enable them deal with their immediate needs and concerns.

The focus of this study was to come up with recommendations that could possible give women more decision making power in local development structures. This study examined how access and participation in local development decision-making structures can enable women to make strategic choices about their concerns and priority needs. On a positive note it was found that there is a considerable improvement in as far as accessing decision making structures and women are now occupying positions of influence such as village heads. Above all some women have been trained by Basilwizi a local community based organisation to engage with their community leaders, to place their demands, preferences and issues that directly affect them.

Important to mention is that there is a significant improvement in terms of women' attendance in development meetings as compared to the previous years when most women were not be allowed to attend development meetings due to negative cultural influences. Those who attended meetings during the absence of their husbands were accused of having slack morals and prospective adulterous. However, it has also to be pointed out that, despite the attendance of women in meetings which has improved, this does not guarantee absolute participation neither can we conclude that women there are now fully empowered. Empowerment embraces many indicators which may vary from one individual to another and from one place to another which may include quality of participation, issues on the agenda, quality of input and decisions being advanced by women themselves.

The study found that there are many inter-connected factors which affect women in accessing and participating in local decision making structures which includes among other things, the current political situation in Zimbabwe where Women Empowerment Programmes are politicized along party lines. The socio-economic and institutional factors as well as perceived inferiority complex and stereo types have hindered women empowerment to access and participate in local development decision making structures. Decision making skills are an important process of equitable and active involvement of all women in problem solving and recognizing a problem or opportunity and finding a solution to it. Women need the ability to make a wide range of choices or options about personal and collective circumstances. However, despite the fact that women constitute about the 52% of the population in Zimbabwe development decision are still the monopoly of the male counterparts and women still seem as inaudible and indistinct subjects at the higher levels such as the WADCO and the RDDC.

This study used the data collected from a simple random sample of 42 respondents including key informants and informal interviewees from two operational wards of Basilwizi, in the

Zambezi Valley. The data used for this study was collected through the aid of a check list and an interview guide with semi structured questionnaires. Tables, pictures and figures were used to illustrate the data. Informal respondents, FGD as well as key informants were interviewed to get information from a wide source.

Based on the research findings, it is therefore recommended that women should strive to enlighten themselves and realise the importance of their empowerment and participation in decision making so that they (women) get into the centre stage of development. The government through local authorities should also design more programmes which are women centred to give an utmost priority for their empowerment through access and participation in local development decision making structures.

Key concepts: Women empowerment, Access to development decision making and Participation.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This study seeks to come up with recommendations to give women more decision making power through their access and participation in local development decision making structures. Women's access and participation in local development decision making structures is aimed at empowering women to organise and mobilise themselves and expand their abilities to enable them make strategic choices when dealing with issues that directly affect them. One of these examples is when women have equal opportunities with men in accessing local development decision making structures at all levels. . The process of empowerment is examined by analysing experiences of the Basilwizi Women Empowerment Project in the Zambezi Valley in Zimbabwe. The introductory part provides a window of understanding on the key issues that are discussed in the whole research project. The chapter also gives a picture of what the research is all about, justification and the relevance of the study. It provides a contextual understanding of some of the complex issues and gaps in as far as the empowerment of women in local development decision making structures is concerned. Finally the chapter explains the objective and the conceptual frame which is a link and a guide in the whole research process.

1.2 General Background

Before examining the background of Basilwizi and its operational areas in Zambezi valley, it might be useful to briefly describe the general overview of the socio economic situation in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is located in Southern Africa with an estimated population of 11.6 million (CSO, 2002). It is a landlocked country bordered by South Africa and Botswana to the south, Namibia and Zambia to the northwest and Mozambique to the east.
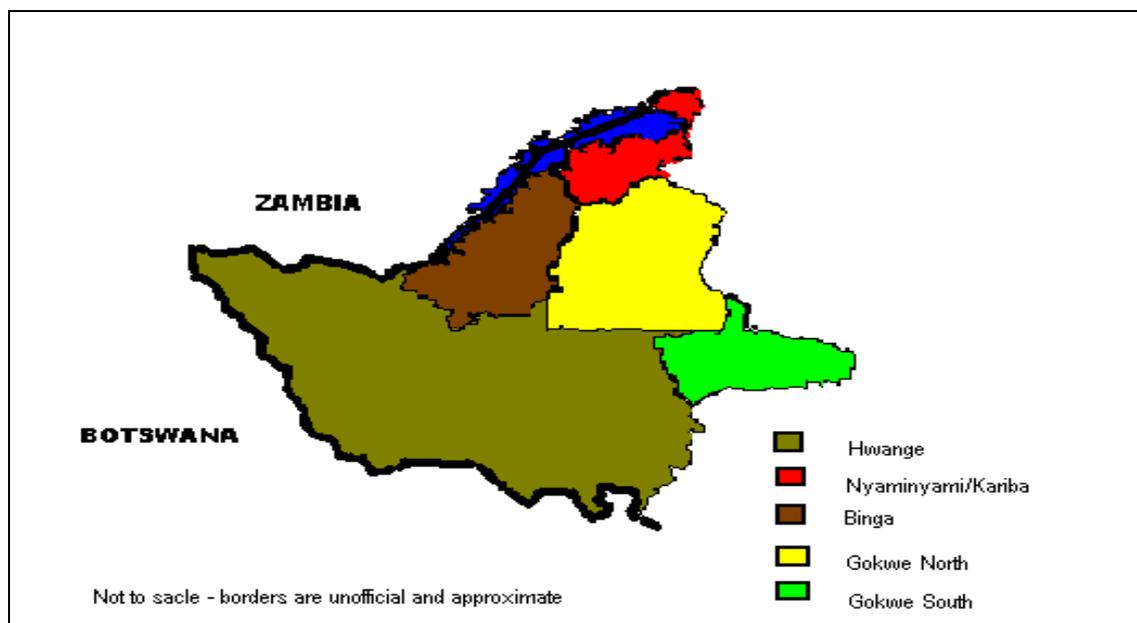
Figure 1: Basilwizi's operational area in the Zambezi valley
Basilwizi's operational area in the Zambezi valley
Source: www.mapsofworld.com

Zimbabwe is one of poorest countries in the world and ranks 151 out of 177 countries in the human development index (UNDP, 2008). In 2006, the life expectancy stood at 35.5 (WHO, 2006) with about half the population surviving on less than US$1 a day (UNDP, 2006). It is estimated about 1.6 million of the population are living with HIV and AIDS (CSO, 2006). The

socio-economic decline experienced for almost a decade, with unemployment rates at more than 70 percent and dwindling support for crucial social services such as health and education has increased the vulnerability of Zimbabwe.

Of the total population, 52% are women and 48% men (Made and Mpofu, 2005). Of the 52% of women in Zimbabwe, 86% live in rural areas where they depend on land for their sustainable livelihoods. In Zimbabwe, gender disparities characterise all aspects of development, with Zimbabwe ranked at 130 in the global gender related development index according to the Human Development Report 2007/2008, reflecting the generally low status of women with respect to access, control and ownership of economic resources and positions in decision-making processes. Although women constitute more than 50% of the Zimbabwean population, they continue to be denied many of their rights and entitlements (UNDP 2008). This is supported by the Zimbabwe Human Development Reports of 2003 in which the Human Development Index for women in the country is constantly lower than for men.

Most women are illiterate and unemployed and often depend on their husbands for their economic needs. Made and Mpofu 2005:4 observe that economic dependency of women and societal norms in Zimbabwe, position most rural women under men. Women lack human agency of decision-making in economic, social and political issues affecting their lives both at home and community level. Therefore women need to be provided an opportunity with skills to enable them challenge unfair practices of both socio economic nature so that they can participate to get involved in development decision making structures to influence and determine their own way of development.

By and large, the Zambezi Valley communities have fared far worse than many other rural communities in Zimbabwe (CCJP, 2000). In the last 26 years, negligible efforts have been made to stimulate social, economic development and empowerment of the Tonga and Korekore people in the resettlement areas. A number of interventions by church based organizations and NGOs in the Zambezi Valley were mainly relief efforts such as food handouts that addressed the results rather than empowering the communities to determine their own development initiatives. Thus, they succeeded in providing relief food in drought periods, but still left the Zambezi communities without addressing the underlying problems that largely emanated, and continue to emanate, from the development institutional structures. According to the survey conducted by Basilwizi in 2005, the Zambezi valley women's problem is lack of empowerment which does not necessarily need to be addressed by providing food handouts, although this has been the case by some local NGOs and other international emergency relief agencies. Women need skills to manage their own development.

Women in the Zambezi valley are constrained from participating effectively in the political and economic activities at the local and national levels due to cultural barriers and gender stereotypes which lead to gender based roles (UNDESA, 2007). Many of them lack the necessary capacity to access local development decision making structures due to discrimination in accessing education and training; women therefore have higher levels of illiteracy and fewer years of schooling than men. Even when they succeed in gaining education and enter the decision-making structures they are most are often marginalized by an institutional setting that reflects men's needs and situation and ignores women's different needs and experience. In the Zambezi valley development decision making structures at RDDC and certain positions such as traditional chieftainship are mostly a monopoly of the male counterpart and generally women are viewed as inaudible and indistinct subjects (Basilwizi baseline survey, 2005).

Zimbabwe inherited a colonial system of local government with the Prime Minister's directive of 1984 establishing decentralised structures called the VIDCOs and WADCOs. (ACPD,

2000). There are however two channels of development decision making structures which are the local councillors and the traditional leadership through which women can present their preferences, needs and concerns. The structures of the (VIDCO) Village Development Committee and WADCO Ward Development Committee seek to bring the participation of ordinary residents especially in the marginalised areas in decision-making at local level. Women can be part of any of these local development decision making structures. The structures have been a big improvement in terms of sustainable livelihood, in that women begin to mobilise themselves working together with their local leadership conducting joint programmes like building schools. The structures usually start from the Village with the coordination of the VIDCO, at the Ward level the coordination is done by the WADCO and chaired by the chief or the councillor depending on which channel has been used. The District Administrator chairs the (RDDC) Rural District Development Committee.

1.3 Brief background of Basilwizi

Basilwizi is a local community based organisation which has been operating in the four Zambezi Valley districts of Nyaminyami, Hwange, Binga, Gokwe North and South. Basilwizi has been implementing a Women Empowerment Project (WEP) since 2003. It is working with the Tonga and Korekore people who are amongst the most marginalised ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, living in the poorest and least developed parts of the country (Conyers, 2002). Their present predicament is largely attributed to their pathetic, abrupt and forced removal from the shores of the Zambezi between 1956 and 1957 to pave way for the Kariba Dam Hydroelectric project and the resultant Lake Kariba (Colson, 1971; Scudder, 2005).

In 2006, for example, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development rated Nyaminyami district number last (78) and Binga 75 compared to all other districts in Zimbabwe. Nyaminyami (Kariba Rural) has the lowest Human Development Index while Binga is the third lowest out of 78 districts in Zimbabwe. They also have the lowest Gender Empowerment Measure. Empirical evidence from World Commission of Dams study (2000) and Save the Children (UK) Household Economy Assessments (2001 – 2005) also confirm that the resettlement areas continue to suffer from high levels of poverty, chronic water and food shortages, lack the basic socio-economic services and empowerment to champion their own development.

Just like any other marginalised ethnic groups in Zimbabwe the Tonga women of Sinakoma and Musuna in the Zambezi Valley, face 'enormous challenges which include lack of recognition to participate in development decision making structures. The Tonga women are viewed as the most backward because of less education and have been described with stereo types and labels such as, 'marginalised', 'isolated', 'poor', 'backward', *minority*, 'primitive', 'dangerous', 'degraded' and 'two-toed people'. This is largely attributed to their low socio economic background worsened by the low levels of education.

Basilwizi believes women can deal with their own situation of accessing and participating in development decision making structures if they are given the skills to engage their leaders on how to access these structures mentioned. Women's problems are best understood by the women themselves. Hence Basilwizi's adoption of working with already existing structures such as the (WETF) Women Empowerment Task Foorce up to RDDC levels to help women through advocacy and lobby, leadership and communication trainings engage the local leadership which include women in those same structures. Basilwizi Trust uses community mobilisation, participation, training and lobby as a means of empowering the women to influence stakeholders and bring about the desired developmental changes.

Decision making structures, also referred to as problem solving structures, have the mandate to look at problems affecting women recognizing the problems or finding a solution to it (Boone and Kurtz 1999). One of the most effective ways of improving well being and status of women is to make sure they have access by full, equal and effective participation in

decision-making structures at all levels of socio economic life. This method promotes and protects women's human rights which finally allow women to benefit from the diverse experiences and capabilities of all its members. However if women do not have access to development structures, decisions are made without their involvement and therefore their future can be meaningless and drastically affected as it becomes future which does not take into cognizance their priorities and needs.

1.3.1 Objectives of Basilwizi
Basilwizi Trust is a community development organisation and its formation was a demonstration of concern and determination by Zambezi valley community to demand and restore their dignity taken away from them by the displacement from the Zambezi River banks.

1.3.2 Vision
Basilwizi envisions an improved, resilient and sustainable community well-being in a poverty free Zambezi Valley

1.3.3 Mission statement
Basilwizi is committed to building the capacity of the Tonga and Korekore communities – men, women, young and old, able disabled – for them to realise improved and sustainable well-being and free themselves from poverty.

1.3.4 Specific objectives of Basilwizi;
- To empower the Tonga and Korekore women to advocate for developmental changes and their inclusion in local development decision making structures on issues that affect their development, and use of local resources around / from Lake Kariba;
- To assist the beneficiaries to improve their socio-economic well being, through the establishment of people centred development projects that meet the basic material needs(Basilwizi 5 year strategic plan, 2009)

The main thrust of the programme is not to empower only women but the community at large. The local leadership (which include the traditional chiefs, councillors and church leaders) is in a position to change certain by- laws to facilitate women empowerment processes. The local leadership has the powers to establish by-laws that will allow women to be included in all development committees formed in the area. The leadership could dictate and say half of the VIDCO or Development Committees to be headed by women eg School Development Committees (SDC). Traditional chiefs are the custodians of culture and have the right to influence change of certain negative cultural practices that inhibit the participation of women in local development decision making structures to allow different sections of the community take part in development processes.

Basilwizi uses an approach where the women themselves are involved in identifying how best to address their current socio-economic problems and how they can be part of the structures that make decisions which have a bearing on their lives. Working with women themselves who are directly affected people is stronger than merely representing them as they express many gestures that may assist in convincing the authorities being negotiated with during the engagement sessions. This is to mean that since women are the ones not accessing local development decision making processes, they are the very people who should engage the leadership to change their own circumstance. The project has so far facilitated the formation of   Women Empowerment Lobby Groups that worked with Basilwizi to lobby key stakeholders. Basilwizi only plays a facilitatory role – providing skills training, technical and management advice.

1.4 Relevance of study

In 2005, Basilwizi carried out a socio economic study in the Zambezi valley communities in. The field study revealed that women are excluded from village and ward development structures (VIDCO and WADCO). As such women receive top down directives for implementation of projects from development agencies. For example the local councillors do not consult women as they claim that they already know the needs of women and there is no need to continue consulting them. This has resulted into failure of district plans to address the priorities of women hence ineffective of the development programmes in the area (Basilwizi baseline survey, 2005) Basilwizi then adopted empowerment as a central strategy of giving women an opportunity to participate in development and demand better services from the local authorities since they are the most disadvantaged members in the Zambezi Valley.

1.5 What Basilwizi has done to empower women

Basilwizi Women Empowerment has been conducting workshops on leadership, communication, lobby and advocacy, access to water resources such as fish, planning and encouraging communities to mobilise themselves, as part of addressing the root causes of their lack of empowerment. The skills training workshops in leadership, communication and lobby helped to build self confidence of women to engage their leaders on problems that affect them which could be an important element of women empowerment. Women have tried to explore several ways to have access to a variety of avenues for exercising power to participate in development programmes, which is a means to women empowerment and decentralisation of power. For example through the WEP there are now some women for the first time since independence in 1980 who were elected into various influential decisions making structures, which includes councillors and Village heads. This was indeed an immense breakthrough. Figures are given in chapter four of the document. This has been a result of women rights campaigns by Basilwizi.

Basilwizi has facilitated and linked women groups with both local and national likeminded organisations for collective voices and to learn from each other. In particular, the project organised inter-district exchange visits where women were sharing experiences and learning from each on their journey to empowerment.

Of great importance, Basilwizi has facilitated dialogue meetings for women to place their demands, raise their concerns and express their preferences through a process of engagements with the government and local authorities for their inclusion in development decision making structures. Women have been able to approach leaders on a wide range of issues pertaining to water, electricity health income generating projects and wild menace animals which destroy their crops. These are some of the major issues that have been raised by most of the women. Women through the WEP have been enlightened to realise the importance of their empowerment so that they (move out of their internalised oppression and get into the centre stage of decision making on issues that directly affect them. The project has been extensively hammering on the entrenched cultural and traditional beliefs that sidelined women from decision making structures. Through adopting a leadership, and communication skills training based approach to development and targeting at the traditional leadership and women, the Project created a broad based understanding of the negative effects of sidelining women from decision making processes. Under the Project's development slogan, '*To empower a woman is to empower the nation,*' WEP drove the women empowerment gospel deep into the heart of previously patriarchical development structures leading to the gradual but sure collapse of ant-women traditional beliefs among staunch cultural conservatives. (World Bank 2001)

1.5.1 My position in the organisation

I am working as an Area Coordinator and being a coordinator I make decisions at district level on the operations of the organisation. These decisions affect firstly my staff and secondly the broader communities that benefit from our Projects. My role is to address women and men equally, within and outside the organisation. I also supervise and control the activities of all programmes and work hard to enhance aconducive atmosphere to work with disadvantaged rural women. For this purpose, I have an opportunity to facilitate awareness workshops on Women empowerment to both men and women.

1.6 Justification

This study was confined to only two operational areas of Basilwizi organisation out of the thirteen areas. Being a coordinator of Basilwizi organisation even if I was not directly involved in the implementation of the WEP, I was eager and curious to find out on my own what I had read about in the progress reports compiled by the field staff. It is hoped that the findings of the study will give women more decision making powers for participation in local development decision making processes. The research results can also provide useful insights to many development agencies on how to stimulate women for self empowerment.

1.7 Problem statement:

Basilwizi is a local community based organisation which has been implementing WEP in the Zambezi valley communities from 2003 to 2009. Basilwizi has been implementing six programmes and WEP is one of the main programmes which was implemented. The aim of Basilwizi has been to empower and build the capacities of women to lobby the local leadership for their inclusion in development decision making structures Currently Basilwizi is in the process of finalising a five year strategic plan and has to make a formal consideration on whether to mobilise funds in order to continue implementing this project. Basilwizi hold the following views about the project:

1. That WEP can continue as a separate project, as implemented before once funds have been mobilised.

2. That WEP has to be mainstreamed or integrated into other projects.

3. That a separate local organisation could be formed to specifically focus on concerns, needs, priorities and issues that directly affect women in the Zambezi valley communities

However Basilwizi lacks sufficient information about the impact of (WEP) in its efforts to empower women for access and participation in local development decision making structures in order to deal with socio economic needs, concerns and issues that directly affect them.

1.8 Research objective:

1. To recommend on how to give women more decision making power in local development decision making structures.

1.8.1 Research question:

In what way have women been empowered to access and participate in local development decision making structures?

1.8.2 Sub questions

1. How are women accessing local development decision making structures?

2. How are women participation in local development decision making structures?

3. What changes have taken place as a result of women's empowerment in local development decision making structures?

4. How are the socio economic and political factors impacting women's empowerment through access and participation of women in local development decision making structures?

1.9 Conceptual framework

This section will define the main concepts as applied in this study in order to enable the reader understand the perspective of the research. This framework gives a picture about the researcher's thoughts, linking empowerment as a vehicle to participation of both men and women in local development decision making structures. It also defines the key concepts used in this study although not in a detailed manner.
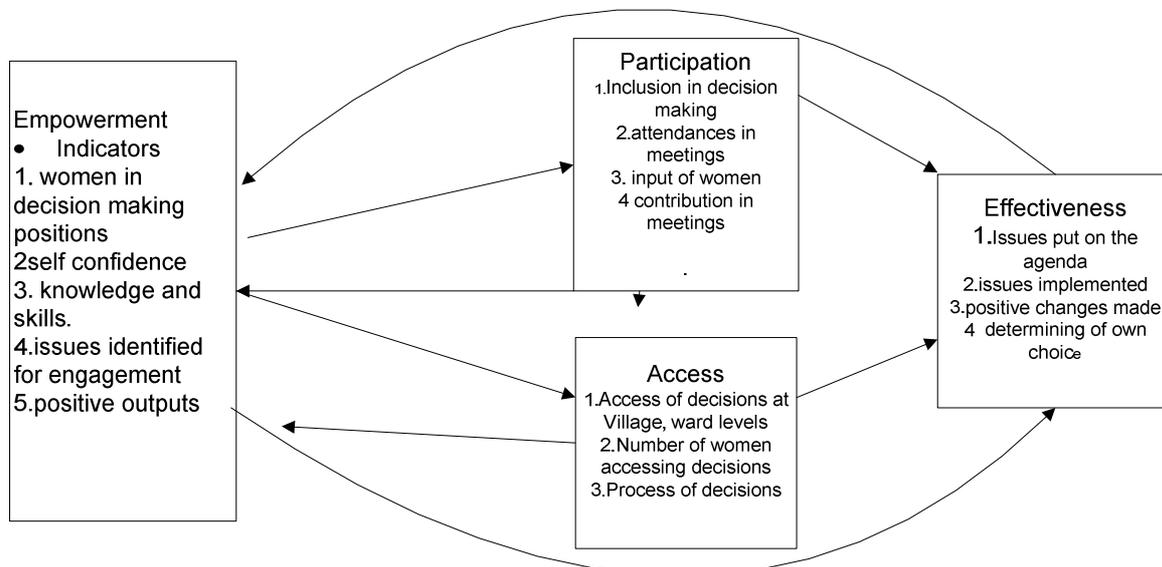
Figure 2: conceptual framework on empowerment of women
Source: Author 2010

This framework attempts to connect all aspects of the research right from the problem definition up to the data analysis. The research is focussing on empowerment of women in local development decision making structures and the dimensions which are participation and access and well as effectiveness are important in this process. The main concepts   are closely related for example, in order to empower women in local development decisions there is need for them to participate and access the decision making structures. This eventual leads to effectiveness in the way they may deal with their empowerment and effectiveness may lead to empowerment. The concepts are providing the basis and guidance in what to consider important throughout the research process. The concepts with indicators and dimensions are linked to all aspects of the research by giving coherence to the research report.

1.10 Definition of key concepts

Women empowerment

The term empowerment has many dimensions and different meanings in different socio-cultural and political contexts. Concepts associated with empowerment, include participation, decision making, access and control over resources and inclusion in community development projects. For the purpose of this study empowerment will refer to a process where women provided an opportunity with skills to enable them challenge unfair practices of both socio economic nature so that they can participate to get involved in decision making structures to influence and determine their own way of development.

Participation
In this study participation will refer to a process in which women influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources through their access in development decision making structures. Participation will be aimed at enhancing the confidence, and knowledge and skills of women to engage the leadership and institutions to lobby for their inclusion in decision make structures.

Access to development decision making structures
For the purpose of getting involved or taking part in development structures which make decisions. It also refers to making quality decisions and having control over development proposal and initiatives. In this study access will be restricted to being part of the decision-making making structures.

Decision making structures
For the purpose of this study decision making structures will refer to bodies such as the VIDCO and WADCO that are involved in problem solving and a process of recognizing a problem or opportunity and finding a solution to it. It is a committee or a body that has the mandate or ability for groups or individuals to make a wide range of choices or options about personal or collective circumstances.

1.11 Study Limitations

In carrying out this research various problems were encountered including, tight programme to meet the respondents at their respective working places. Distance from one village to another posed great challenges in carrying out the survey. Homes were far apart from each other and some of the interviewees did not honour the appointments, which were arranged. The researcher had to look for them, and some of them were found at beer drinking gatherings. The research was also conducted during the National constitutional review exercise and eight of the key informants kept on postponing the dates for interviews. Therefore the researcher only managed to interview forty two people including FGD participants instead of fifty.

1.12 Summary

The first chapter of the study mainly looked at the origins of the research which was undertaken. It gave the general overview of Basilwizi in the Zambezi valley in respect to empowerment of women in local development decision making structures. It pointed the problem which led to undertaking this study. The objective, of the study is to come up with recommendations on how to give women more local development decision making powers. The chapter also defines the key concepts from the study. The next chapter will look at the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction:
This chapter reviews the literature on the empowerment of women in local development processes. It starts by defining three main concepts empowerment, participation, and women's access to decisions in relation to local development structures. After the definition of the key concepts a discussion will follow to show the link of these concepts in development processes. The concepts of empowerment, access to decision making and participation are broad with many dimensions susceptible to various interpretations depending on their socio cultural contexts. The multi dimensional nature and interpretation of participation, decision making and empowerment also expose them to abuse by development practitioners and agencies.

The three concepts are commonly used in development circles and known to have raised a lot of debates within multilateral agencies such as World Bank, UN agencies, bilateral donors and International NGOs. Understandably they have been used to such an extent that they have now become 'buzzword' in development processes and are also part of the loosely used development jargon. The concepts have been widely used and at the same time accused of being co-opted and providing lip service to the interests of the most disadvantaged members that they claim to represent. Consequently, their meanings and applications have been blurred yet they could be some of the most important concepts in development sphere.

2.2 Women empowerment
According to Laverack (2001) empowerment is 'a process that allows individuals and groups to organise and mobilise themselves in a manner that leads towards social and political change'. It consists of a series of conscious stages taken by individuals to gain access to decisions to better express and defend their needs and priorities. Of course empowerment is not about taking power from an individual and handing it over to another. It is a means to an end not necessarily an end, in itself (Schuler &Hashemi,1994) Individuals like women with limited access to decisions and control over their own decisions are vulnerable to exploitation. For example within particular communities, women and girls have less power and access to decisions and this compounds their vulnerability through unwanted marriages and sexually transmitted diseases. Therefore this process of empowering women is to elevate the unequal balance of power in favour of women. This is however not meant to create an antagonism between men and women.

Because of multiple challenges that deter empowerment of the poor and the marginalised particularly women in development, the word empowerment sounds like just a 'feel good' buzzword that remains full of good promises but in reality delivers very little change. (Long 2001:86).While the argument brought forward by Long is valid it has however to be understood that it is not the concept of empowerment in itself which produces good promises or good results but it is those involved in applying the concepts to blame. Off course when the route or process of empowerment is not adhered to there is a likelihood of failure to realise good results.

Development practitioners and theorists as well as researchers hold a belief that empowerment is not easy to define because it is a hotly contested term (Chant, 2008:186) and often abused, misused and confused (Tandon, 2008:289). In this context empowerment is defined as 'access to political structures and formal decision making and access to markets and incomes that enable people to participate in economic decision making' (Rowland 1995:102).

Kabeer (2001:19) defines empowerment as the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. She emphasises that empowerment only occurs to individuals who had been disempowered and later gained the exercise of choice they had been denied to do so in the past. This is very typical of the Tonga and Korekore women who were disadvantaged from enjoying the fruits of empowerment due to dam induced grievances.

The word empowerment as pointed out in the first definition is not only a contested concept it is used in various ways by different individuals with differing world views and political persuasions, but there is also disagreement over the aims of empowerment (Johnson & Mayoux 1998:148). For example, who is to be empowered in the process, is it the 'community', 'women', 'the poor', for what purpose, and what would be the role of intervening agencies in the empowering process? (Cleaver, 1999: 599). Empowerment also refers to two different thrusts. Firstly, it provides tools for self reliance mainly in economic ways where individuals get start up capital for investment in a project that economically transforms their lives; secondly, it provides skills that enables individuals to challenge existing inequitable social or political power relations, enhances the capacities of individuals to get involved in the decision making processes to determine their own development (Rowland 1995:103).

In this particular section of the study empowerment a process where individuals or groups are provided an opportunity with skills to enable them challenge unfair practices of both socio economic nature so that they can participate to get involved in decision making processes to influence and determine their own way of development. This will be the working definition although empowerment in some cases will be used interchangeable with participation because the two concepts are closely related. In essence empowerment may not mean anything if it fails to take into cognisance some elements of participation. The World Bank (2001) puts much emphasis on the participation and empowerment of the voiceless and powerless in the decision making process as part of a three tie strategy to combat global poverty through promoting opportunity, and enhancing security (World Bank, 2001:6).

2.3 Women's access to decision making structures.

The concept of access to decision making structures, in recent applications, relates to the involvement of socially and economically marginalised people like women in making decisions over their own resources management and development initiatives (Williams 2004:96). Diverted from its previous radical connotations (Cornwall 2000:7), present-day decision making called participatory development discourse and practice favours a narrow focus on development interventions. It refers to having entry or ability to make decisions on projects implementation in a more efficient and effective manner (Hickey & Mohan 2004). Development decision making processes through the local development structures is perceived as a crucial approach that encourages women to be psychologically and practically involved in the determination of their own futures (St. Anne 1999:68). Women's opportunities to access and influence local development decision making processes rests not on simply getting them into some committees but on how and whether they can act on their own without any one pushing them. It depends on whether they can raise their voices are listened to and respected.

Socio economic development has been linked to women's access and active participation in decision-making structures. Even though there are a number of laws and influences in favour of women's integration into positions of authority, women continue to play a marginal role in decision- making structures (Ramata 2010) In fact only a small number of women actually rise to positions with decision-making powers, and those who do access them

maintain them for only short periods. There is a need for an affirmative approach to give women more decision making powers to enable them deal with their own problems.

Agarwal (1997) draws attention to familiar constraints: time; male domination and bias; socio economic constraints about women's capabilities and roles; the absence of a 'critical mass'' of women; and lack of public speaking experience. The statement being raised though it holds water cannot be a justification why women should not have access to decision making structures. This is only a desperate excuse because men were not born public speakers, was it not the environment that shaped them into what they are today. Similarly women can also be shaped and moulded in the same way men have moulded as long as the environment is permissive.

2.3.1 How women can access development decision making structure.?

The first step for women to access local development decision making structures is to focus on the issue of increasing the number of women in decision-making positions (UNDAW. 2005) It is from there that women can be given the skills or capacities to make quality decisions.

Women's decision making power cannot be enhanced without any effort being made. One critical factor is the use of a "gender lens" a way of looking at things from a gender perspective where all men and women take part. It is also important that women get enough information about how to get into local development decision making structures, what it means to get into those structures. Review of information provided about the local authority services and process, how it is provided and where it is provided to determine if it meets the information needs and realities of women in the community (Kit, 2004) Before we can talk about development decision making structures, information is important as it is the basis on which to make sound decisions, how to become part of the structures and how to determine how the decisions will be made all need to be taken cognisance of women from diverse communities and perspectives. Kit 2004, further recommends that information on why women's input and participation is important, how they can have input, how they can access decisions helps women overcome barriers to participation and how to meet the needs of women in their full diversity.

2.4 Participation of women development decision making structures

Like empowerment participation has become an orthodox development concept with many dimensions. Its meaning depends on the context in which it is used and it may mean different things at different times. There is no agreement among planners and professionals about the meaning and contribution of participation to improving the lives of people, particularly the poor and disadvantaged. Some completely dismiss its value altogether, while others believe that it is the 'magic bullet', that will ensure improvements especially in the context of poverty alleviation through access and participation of women in development decision making structures ((Rifkin and Pride, 2001)

The emphasis on participation is holding out the promise of inclusion, of creating spaces for the less vocal and powerful to exercise their voices and begin to gain more choices, to bring about more equitable development and trying at the same time to address challenges of equity (Gaventa, 2002) However in most cases a number of projects often boil down to situations in which only the voices of the vocal few are raised and heard. For example women and other marginalised groups are those most likely to lose out, who may find themselves and their interests undermined or overlooked.

Even though the concept of participation is ambiguous, there is however an agreement on two ways in which participation is used, as a *means* to accomplish the objectives for empowerment of individuals in more effectively and efficiently. The other way is that it used as an *end* where the community members including women are empowered to control their own development process (Nelson & Wright 1995:1, Oakley et al 1991:7-8). The women should be in the forefront to dictate what they want for their needs to be met.

The World Bank (1996) defines participation as 'a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decision making and resources which affect them' (World Bank 1996:3). The shortfall of the World Bank view on participation is that it is gender-blind, because a term such as 'stakeholders' is complex as it does not show *who* participates, *why* participate and *when* to participate (Cornwall, 2008:277). Dimensions of participation include manipulating, informing, consulting, and collaborative and decision making and this need to be clearly understood.

As already stated above, the approach in participation is that there is need to consult all women and once they have been consulted, still that is not enough on its own, there is further need to keep them informed. They need to know how their contribution has influenced the decision being made. Participation goes even beyond mere consultation or collaboration. According to Pretty, (1994) participation should be based on three dimensions; the distribution of information input, decision making authority, different key functions in development planning, such as situation analysis, problem identification, this is where women identify their problems, goal setting and implementation of decisions. Therefore it is crucial that women participate by getting involved in structures in order have input and by making development decisions. One practical example is when a decision about a location of a borehole is made by men when it actual sense women are the ones who frequently use those facilities. It is best in such cases that those affected become the ones who have the decision making powers and influence over the use of the particular resource.

In this study participation is used to refer to a process in which women influence and share control over development initiatives and decisions. Participation calls for women to be empowered to increase their knowledge, influence and control over decisions of their own development initiatives. The purpose of participation is exercising voice, choice and ability to solve problems as they arise.

2.4.1 Participation and gender equality
The term 'gender' is difficult to define because often it is misconstrued as sex or taken to mean 'women's issues (Cornwall, 1998:46; Guijt and Shah, 1998:7). Gender is defined as social and cultural constructed roles of men and women as well as relationships between them in a given society at a specific time and place (Cornwall, 1998:49; UNDP, 2005:3). In view of that perspective, the gender definition differs from culture to culture and mostly from one social group to another. The meaning is influenced by the expectations and perceptions arising from the environment and varies according to class, ethnicity and socio cultural factors. Being a man and woman is not fixed but is part of the ways in which people of our historical, social and cultural context have come to think (Kabeer, 2003; Moser, 1993). This clearly shows that culture is dynamic and can be influenced to change. On the other hand, the term sex, which in most cases, is confused with gender (Derbyshire, 2002:8) denotes the biological differences between females and males. Sex cannot be changed, while gender roles and relationships do change due to evolving needs and opportunities in society (UNDP, 2005:3; UNHCR, 2008:12).

Gender equality refers a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Equality between men and women in most cases exists when both men and women have an equal share in the distribution of power and influence; have equal opportunities for financial independence through work or

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through setting up businesses; enjoy equal access to education and the opportunity to develop personal ambitions. A critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives(Trotz, 2008) Women's empowerment is vital to sustainable development and the realisation of their worthiness and human rights for all.

Women participation in development decision making structures was given great impetus by the writings of Boserup in the 1970s (Pearson, 2000; Rowlands, 1997; Kabeer, 1994). The women issues within development structures can be understood by examining two major streams of theory and practice that have been adopted and developed in the development trajectory (Humble, 1998:35). It is about Gender and Development (GAD) and Women in Development (WID) However, though the two theories have different approaches, they tend to overlap each other (Young, 1997:51). Most of the characteristics of the forerunner, the WID theory, are still well pronounced in the GAD approach.

Arguably most supporters of the above stated theory (WID) maintain that mainstream development theories such as the modernisation theory of economic growth for years concentrated on men as heads of households and producers at the same time discriminating men by leaving them out of the development structures (Rowlands, 1997). This is also confirmed by Tandon (2008:287) that both colonial and post-colonial governments of independent states in most developing countries, including Zimbabwe, bypassed women in their diffusion of national development programmes. Similarly when it comes to development decision making structures men have taken a centre stage ignoring the participation of women. Trotz (2008:353) slightly differs with Rowlands and Tandon and argues that the question was not whether women were left out of the development process, but the ball of contention was the manner in which they were involved.

In that perspective, the WID approach aimed to mainstream women into economic, political and social life (Martinussen, 1997; Karl 1995). Kabeer (1994) and Young (1997:51) do concur that WID 's main focus was to involve women in the development decision making structures, however they tend to slightly differs with Martinussen who argues that the WID approach basically concentrated on women's access to cash incomes. The approach emphasises women to be organised into collective groupings such as cooperatives and clubs for productive purposes so as to increase their bargaining power in development decision making system (Humble, 1998). The WID did not bear the desired results as an approach. Of course it promoted women to access cash incomes in order to participate in development decision making initiatives, the approach created women's projects that did not involve men. Instead of increasing women's bargaining power these very projects created women's world which further discriminated and marginalised women from participating in development theory and practice (Cornwall, 2000).

Even though the WID theory is known to have gained support and popularity in the 1970s and 1980s (Pearson, 2000), it is however important to point out that did not pose questions on the role of gender relations, structural inequalities and political positions restricting women to access decisions to development initiatives (Razavi and Miller, 1995). Gender relations are the dimension of male/female relations that involve actual and potential heterosexual relationships (Cornwall 2000). By not questioning gender relations and social structural inequalities between men and women, the WID paradigm did not improve women's rights and status, nor did it empower women them to make development decisions(Pearson 2000).

Feminist have also criticised the WID approach as being problematic in using women as an analytical category for addressing gender inequalities and promoting gender participation and empowerment in development circles (Pearson, 2000; Kabeer, 1994). Using women as a centre of analysis led to focus women in isolation from the rest of their lives and from the

relationships through which such inequalities are perpetuated. A focus which was strictly on women, led to WID analysis was not clear on how gender relations work and how they impact upon women in society, their sustainable livelihoods and sustainable development at large (Young, 1993 in Martinussen 1997). There was too much concentration on women and ignored the component of men. This then made it difficult for men to relinquish and share power and roles with their female counterparts, nor did men even contribute an inch of support to encourage women participation into mainstream development initiatives.

As opposed to the WID theory, the GAD is the 'alternative approach' (Humble, 1998:35) which believes that women have always participated in development theory and practice but from an unequal position (Hope and Timmel, 1999). This is supported by Martinussen(1997) who argues that the GAD approach maintains that women have been incorporated into the development structures in many different ways, and what is of utmost significance is focusing on the analysis of the totality of how men and women live in a broader and holistic perspective rather than merely on narrow distinctions of productive and reproductive roles.[1]

A scholar feminist called Young (1997) argue that GAD does not only focus on women per se, but specifically on gender relations. As pointed out above, these are relations between men and women in various settings; be it socially or culturally (Rowlands, 1995:1997).[2] The GAD approach is not only concerned with gender relations, but with the dynamics and dimensions of the gender relations within the domains of social processes and social organisations in shaping particular aspects of society (Young, 1997). This notion is affirmed by Akerkar (2001) who argued that the GAD approach aims to look at the social relations and interactions between women and men and the contexts and constructions of masculinities and femininities.

2.4.2 Under what conditions can women participate effectively in decision making processes?

It is of significant importance to understand that empowerment is essentially a bottom-up process rather than something that can be initiated as a top-down strategy. Understanding empowerment in this manner means development practitioners cannot claim to empower women to make decisions. Women must empower themselves (Sally 1997) Sally further maintains that empowerment cannot be defined in terms of specific activities or end results because it involves a process whereby women can freely analyse, develop and voice their needs and interests, without them being pre-defined, or imposed from above, by planners or other social actors (Sally 1997).

Development planners working towards the empowerment of women must develop ways of enabling women themselves to critically assess their own situation and create and shape a transformation in their own communities. As a result this is transformation should be recognised seen as part of an ongoing process empowerment rather than as a static goal in the distant future. Furthermore, in order to make more effective decisions it is essential to understand the problem to be solved. The women or individuals in the process of making decisions need to set boundary conditions for the solution. It is also essential to know the limitations or set boundaries so that one does not limit himself or her to something that is unrealistic.

For increased decision-making power at group and individual level, empowerment in one area cannot be sustained without attention to other areas. For example there are numerous normative principles that must be adhered to during participatory processes. For example

Chambers, (2007) suggest that for effective participation which leads to empowerment, coupled with sound decisions to take place all stakeholders should be involved, participants must have equal opportunities to speak out freely, ownership needs to rest on the participants and this participation must eventually lead to the empowerment of the participants with good decision. Development interventionists or agencies sometimes tend to act as facilitators and listeners in the process and should 'handover the relay "stick" to the women to do much on their own.

For participation to promote empowerment or visa versa it needs to be more than a process of consultation over decisions to be made. Strategies to support women's empowerment should encourage women's participation at all stages of decision making processes, including evaluation. Attention to location and timing of meetings are also important to ensure women's participation.

To reinforce what has been said above there are basically three main ways in which empowerment through participatory means is used in development and these are cosmetic label, co-opting practice and empowering process (Mikkleson, 2005: Chambers,2007). Cosmetic participation is used as a label to make both development agents appear good while in reality there will be no sign of active participation of people (Chambers, 2007).

The second use of empowerment through means of participation is the, co-opting practice, described as the mobilisation of local labour whereby communities contribute their time and effort to reduce outside costs (Mikkleson, 2005). While on the same point, participation in the development context means women and men supplying their free time and labour in a prescribed, stereotypical and gender specific way (Kindon1998). Kindon noted that women either are pre-occupied with preparing offerings, refreshments and decorations for the government officials or income-generating activities which keep them in the domestic sphere performing their perceived roles as wives and mothers. In contrast, their male counter-parts participate in decision-making foras related to community development planning. Such stereotypical role-differentiations marginalise women from being actively involved in participating in the issues that affect their lives. This type of 'biased-gendered participation' within a community reflects that women's participation is mere rhetoric than full participants in local development decision making structures.

Thirdly, empowerment through participation can be used as a means that enables communities to come up with their own priorities and make their own decisions of the issues directly affecting them (Mikkleson, 2005: Chambers, 1995). This form of empowerment can be equated to how PRA exercises which triggered a rural community in Kenya to mobilise each other after exploring causes of poor child nutrition. This analysis led the community to block the road when the Member of Parliament next came to visit and demanded accountability on issues affecting the community (Cornwall, 2008:274)

2.5 Summary

This chapter explored the academic debates and theoretical approaches underlying the concepts of women empowerment in local development decision making structures. It also discussed the key concepts which are empowerment, decision making, access to decision making structures and participation. It has been noted that the four concepts, are all buzzwords in local development processes. It is also important to mention that achievement of participation and empowerment is a process and does not come in a day. There are numerous challenges such as planning and commitment of funds and mobilising communities that need to be taken into cognisance if any success is to be realised. Secondly, it has been revealed that the use of participation and empowerment is

interconnected as a means for communities to come up with their concerns, needs and priorities through the process of decision making.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the, scope, population, research instruments, and data collection approach, process of collection, limitations and methodology used by the researcher in this study. It also focuses on the data analysis. The justification for the particular methodology used in the light of the chosen topic has been outlined to demonstrate why the methods selected are appropriate to answering the research questions.

3.2 Research context

3.2.1Study area

Zambezi Valley of Hwange and Binga is the home of the Tonga people. It is situated in Matabeleland North province in North Western margin of Zimbabwe latitude 17 06 and 18 24 East (Lovell 1999). The choice in selecting Musuna and Sinakoma wards has been attributed to the fact that these are the first areas where the Women Empowerment project started out of the other 13 areas of Basilwizi operations before the project expanded to other areas. The choices of the areas are also influenced by their proximity and accessibility to the main road.

3.3 Methods of data collection

3.3.1 Research strategy

A case study approach was used in this study to critically examine the research questions. A case study is important because it tends to provide in depth qualitative information and also involves observation and interaction with the respondents. It provides a systematic way of collecting data, analysing and presenting it. Case studies recognize the "complexity and embeddedness' of social truth"; they are "strong in reality" and their "strength lies in their attention to the subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right" (Cohen and Manion 1999 p. 150). A case study research generally answers one or more open ended questions which begin with "how". The questions are targeted to a limited number of events or conditions and their inter-relationships (Eisehardt, 1989). The use of the case study was ideal and illuminating in the sense that it provides an opportunity for the researcher not only to critically reflect on the Programme activities. Having participated in the project, it made it easy to come up with recommendations on the impact of WEP in respect to the empowerment and participation of women in development decision making processes in light of new skills, knowledge and development theories acquired during the course of the Masters studies.

3.3.2 Sample selection and size

3.3.3 Primary source

The community members formed part of the primary source to provide direct evidence or firsthand testimony about the empowerment of the women in the Zambezi valley communities. Twenty six focussed group discussions community participants from various decision making committees and various positions of influence were strategically selected to represent the Musuna and Sinakoma wards in the Zambezi Valley. These have been the direct beneficiaries of WEP and some of them committee members of the village and ward development committee. Out of the total number of twenty six, 14 of them were women while 12 were men. The selection was strategic just to ensure the views of all the categories from development decision making structures were represented in the discussions. The benefits of focus group discussion include gaining insights into people's shared understandings of everyday life and the ways in which individuals are influenced by others in a group situation.

3.3.4 Informal interviews

Informal interviews were also conducted to 10 people in which, 5 of them were men while 5 were women. As part of data gathering process I also used informal interviews as it is one of the best ways to come closer to the people and solicit the required information. People usually find it easier and freely to express themselves especially in places like Zimbabwe where the political situation and sensitive nature of empowerment projects are a threat to the government. The tool was very useful although it has one disadvantage that one cannot remember everything discussed with the people. All in all 10 people were interviewed as reflected on table1

3.3.5 Key informants

Six key informants were selected and those were individuals who were selected on the basis, of their broad knowledge and experience in the related field of study, and because they know the people, the communities and their services very well. The following was the composition of the key informants; The Basilwizi Programme Director, Binga District Administrator, the Binga Head of the Ministry of Gender and Women Affairs, the Hwange Rural District Councillor, the Binga Rural District Council Executive Officer, the Village Head of Musuna.

A wide selection helped to bring out a wide range of views, opinions, and attitudes. I was looking for key informants who would match my predefined group. Through the simple random sample I tried as much possible to verify, if the respondents met the criteria for being in the sample. It was of course important to collect information from a wide range of people including the heads of institutions, local leadership and community members but the most important thing was to interview people who had firsthand knowledge about the issues on the ground. The distribution of all the respondents is summarized below in table 1

Table 1: Distribution of all respondents interviewed

Type of respondent	Sex		Total
	m	f	
FGD	12	14	26
Informal	5	5	10
Key informants	4	2	6
Total	21	21	42

Source: Field results

A simple random sampling was used in which   the research targets were given an equal chance of being selected. A simple random sample is one of the methods which are free from sampling bias although it can be cumbersome when one tries to use a random number table to choose the elementary units. . However, this does not mean that the method is absolutely perfect as a representation of the population. It only allows one to draw externally justified conclusions about the whole population based on the sample. Names of FGDs participants were mixed up and picked from the hat and each name having an equal chance of being picked up. The exercise was repeated and those names that were selected twice formed the list for the focussed group discussion

3.4 Secondary source

This study depended on secondary data sources in the Netherlands libraries such as journal articles and books and use of published material from the Wageningen University libraries and other resource centres. The information collected was in relation to the empowerment and participation of communities in development structures, theories about the main concepts such as empowerment and why empowerment is important in this study. The information collected shade light on empowerment in practice and how development practitioners view it. The information was useful to answer the hypothesis formulated in the study. Basilwizi official documents were used these included the Baseline Survey Reports, Project Proposals and Annual reports, the 2004-2009 five year strategic document, and annual review and evaluations reports.

3.5 Interviews

A guide/check list with semi structured (open ended) interviews was used to solicit information from the key informants. The questions were being guided by the objectives form the research and had to provide answers to the research sub questions. An interview guide and check list was useful in collecting qualitative data. It also helped to understand the really issues and the respondent's point of view instead of generalising the issues. The use of semi structured questions is that it allows the researcher to probe further, get clarifications on the missing information and be in a position to continuously evaluate the progress of the interview.

The pride and identify of the Tonga people of Sinakoma ward rests in their language and rich cultural heritage. For the research to maintain relevance, use of English was restricted to the working part of this research, while focussed group discussions interviews and other discussions were conducted in the local Tonga language except of course institutional interviews. Experience with researches has shown that the quantity and quality of information improves if the respondents are approached in their own language. Respondents easily open up and feel honoured to be part of the research process rather than mere subjects of investigation.

The availability of many sources and the flexibility of respondents who were willing to be interviewed even for the second time during follow- up interviews were considered crucial for purposes of data triangulation. This is also commended by (Punch, 2005) who emphasises that in order ensure consistencies in data collected everything should be checked from more than one source. The use of documents for data triangulation was important.

3.6 Data Processing and Analysis

A mass of raw data was collected during the research. The initial stage the researcher took was to clean the data by selecting data which was relevant in answering the designed questions. The researcher went ahead and verified whether there was any information missing and whether there any consistency. Gathered figures were analysed manually and in some instances were plotted on graphs or pie charts depending on what kind of information

3.7 Summary

This section looked at research context, method of data collection, the sample size, made up of key informants, FGDs and informal interviewees. Interviews and FGDs were used to collect data. The next chapter will focus on the findings and discussion of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the findings and analysis of data. It deals with the analysis of the major research findings about the empowerment of women through their access and participation in development decision making structures. The chapter endeavours to address the research questions as outlined in chapter one using the case study of the Zambezi Valley with specific reference to Musuna and Sinakoma wards. The case study provides a window of understanding into the level of participation and access of development decision making processes by women. The case studies are examined in order to draw lessons and provide a contextual understanding into some of the complex issues or gaps in as far as local development decision making structures are concerned. The chapter is there to extend experiences or add strength to what is already known through previous researches.

This chapter looks at access, participation and effectiveness of women in local development decision making structures. The three key areas (access, participation and effectiveness) of women in local development decision making structures are ingredients towards an ultimate goal of empowerment. In this chapter effectiveness of women in local development decision making structures is being measured through the success stories, realised during the implementation of the Basilwizi Women Empowerment and other Women Empowerment related projects in the two selected operational wards of Basilwizi. An analysis of the results was done based also on my own observations since I have worked in the operational areas of Basilwizi for seven years now. Finally, the chapter looked at how socio economic and political factors have an impact on women empowerment in local development decision making processes. It then closes with an overview of the findings.

4.2 Women's access to local development decision making structures:

The data was collected from key informants, informal respondents and FGD with women and men occupying various decision making positions which include the village heads, Women Empowerment Task force, Councillors and Ward Coordinators in the two operating wards of Basilwizi.

4.2.1 Decision making channels:
Decision making channels are those pathways or means which women can use to present their concerns. In this case there are two channels which women use to present their development concerns and needs. The Binga and Hwange Rural District Councils as well as the FGD participants also confirmed that there were basically two existing channels through which women and other community members can channel their grievances. Table 2 below gives a summary of the two channels.

Table 2: Roles of the local traditional and rural council's channels in a comparative chart

Rural councils	Traditional leaders
Councillors are elected by the residents of the wards under the Rural District Councils Act	Traditional leaders are appointed in accordance with the traditions of people in a particular are (under the Traditional leaders Act)
Councillors serve for four years	Traditional leaders are appointed for life
There are councillors throughout Zimbabwe in communal areas, resettlement and urban areas	Traditional leaders are only found in the rural areas
Councillors are responsible for the implementation of development programmes	Traditional leaders are responsible for maintenance of customs and traditions, peace and stability and initiating development
Councillors chair ward development committees below	Traditional leaders chair ward assemblies (which are composed of village heads who are also chair VIDCOs)

Source: Adapted from ACDP, 2006

It is important for women to know these decision channels so that they are confident where and to whom they are presenting their needs and priorities. It is not only about presenting their needs but also knowing which issues they are presenting for quick attention. Looking at the table we find that traditional leaders are more concerned about traditions, customs and maintenance of peace, therefore it is crucial for women to know these decision making channels so that they don't just approach anyone who may not be relevant to their particular need. Both elected councillors and traditional chiefs are members of the Rural District Councils and support each other in promoting the development of their areas. The lowest level at the grassroots is the Village.

During the research process it was observed that there are no women who are allowed to become traditional chiefs. However women can be allowed to access the VIDCO, WADCO and RDDC structures unfortunately it has been the traditions and cultural practices of the Tonga community that a woman cannot hold any position of chieftainship. It has also been noticed that there is duplication of duties between the chief and the councilor's roles and between the Ward development Committee and the Ward Assembly. However, important to note is that women can use any of the two channels to present their issues.

4.2.2 Decision making structures
According to two Rural District Council officials who were interviewed as key informants and discussions which were held with FGD participants, decision making structures were those bodies or governing bodies responsible for overseeing development activities. These bodies make decisions related to development.

4.2.3 Village level
At village level the FGD participants who were mostly members of the Women Empowerment Task Force stated that the VIDCO was the structure that worked closely with women. However the participants made it clear that there were basically three levels of decision making structures. Chairpersons of different sectors or portfolios bring various development issues to the VIDCO forum for discussion. The VIDCO allows the participation of ordinary people particularly in the marginalised communities in decision-making at local level. The first level is the VIDCO, at ward level there is a WADCO and an RDDC at district level.

Composition of the village development committee.
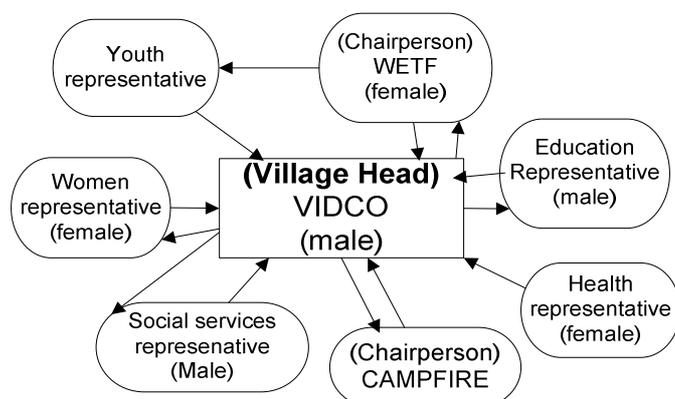
Figure 3: Composition of the Village Development committee
Source: Field results

The FDGs were asked to draw the composition of a VIDCO and how it was linked to the village. They came up with different diagrams but after discussions they agreed on one figure which had common characteristics. The differences in the drawings were in the arrows. Some of the groups had drawn a figure with all arrows pointing at the village head while some had put the village head at the top of the figure.

During the discussion it was revealed that there were many interpretations about a VIDCO structure. It was viewed as a coordinating body/configuration with a Village head being a facilitator not a leader and this was shown by the arrows pointing at him at some of the arrows pointing at the members of the VIDCO. Discussions revealed that there are important features of a VIDCO which included among other things, working to find solutions together, reaching a consensus, bringing conflict on the table, minimising domination of the elites as much as possible and encouraging cooperation. The VIDCO is composed of eight members of which, five are men while 3 are women and more details will be given on who accesses development decision making structures at the village level in the later sections.

When asked why there were more men than women in the VIDCO structure, men stated that women lacked confidence and willingness to be voted into the VIDCO structure. Women also agreed on this statement. It was learnt that women lacked support by other women that is to say when a woman wanted to stand for election she may not get any backing or support from other women.

A question was asked about issues that are discussed by women at a VIDCO level. It was stated that the VIDCO discusses issues that are generated by the communities and they do not only discuss issues that affect women. Mostly issues that directly affect women and women centred were always discussed at a WETF (Women Empowerment Task Force forum. Examples of such issues were water problems, long distances to the water points, distances to clinics, access and control of local resources and income generating projects for women are discussed at such meetings.

It was learnt that a Women Empowerment Task force (WETF) is a deliberate move by the Basilwizi to give space to women to advance their development related issues. This on its own is a positive move in that there is a deliberate effort to place the preferences and demands of women through this committee. Further investigations revealed that WETF is

there to spearhead development forums on which women come together to articulate their needs and arrange engagement meetings with their leaders on issues that directly affect them. One of the top issues which have been on the agenda for discussion was the issue of water for domestic use. Women usually spend most of their precious time walking long distances to fetch water for domestic use. It was found that the issue on electricity has been raised by women and is now on the VIDCO agenda. Women walk long hours in the forests looking for firewood and in the event that they are found by the Forestry Commission, they are harassed and sent a way, suspected to be poachers. The list is in inexhaustive.

Men are not seriously affected because fetching firewood and water are roles that are ascribed to women by the community not by nature. The issues are discussed by the women themselves through the WETF forum before they are taken to the VIDCO or referred to the WADCO. Women meet once at any time they may feel necessary and as long as there are issues to discuss. From the look of things it appears the WETF accommodates the issues of women more than the VIDCO although there is no evidence for this. The WETF is more women centred and because it is run by women themselves, it is more accessible to women and women have control over the decisions made by it. Also, important to note is that the frequency of the meetings which come after a long interval, implies that issues take time to be solved.

Further probing showed that the WETF had their last meeting some months ago. From the discussions with 26 participants of a FGD the WETF has been active during 2008-2009. For now it seems that it is no longer very active because the WEP has come to an end. WETF used to meet once in a month, but it now meets or never meets after 3 months. Further investigations especially with interviews carried at an informal level showed that there is no practical support to make the WETF more viable and active due to financial constraints facing the RDC (Rural district council) .The local authority (RDC) used to fund WETF for its meetings. Basilwizi now, is the only organisation which is providing a facilitatory role and support in the form of skills training works.

However, according to the Binga Disrict Administrator the Women Empowerment Task Force group facilitated greater unity amongst the widely-spread Tonga women of the Zambezi Valley from 2006-2007. Observations indicate that the women Tonga women now view themselves as a one entity through this committee regardless of the artificial boundaries that exist between them. This unity around the women empowerment has fostered cooperation on the rights of women to development decision making processes, as this affects all the Zambezi Valley communities. The project now receives strong community-based support amongst some of the traditional leaders in the four Zambezi Valley districts.

4.2.4 Decision making structure at ward level
The WADCO is the next level after the VIDCO. It operates and coordinates development decision making activities at a ward level. It generates and initiates development decisions and it is headed by the Councilor while the traditional chief chairs the Ward assembly although these are the same people. Village heads from different villages at a ward level make up a WADCO.

Composition of the ward development committee.
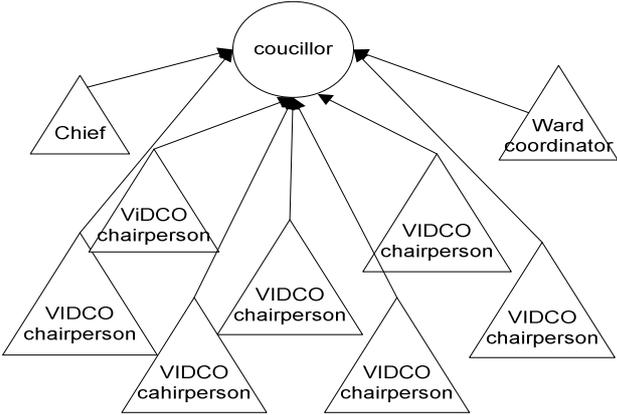
Figure 4: Composition of the ward development committee.
Source: Field results

The WADCO is composed of VIDCO chairpersons and the traditional chief as well is part of the structure. The arrows point to the councillor who chairs the VIDCO structure. The FGDs were asked why the arrows were all pointing to the councillor and it was stated that a councillor is a politician and usually politicians are centralized in the way they operate. They have a tendency of dominating some of the decisions. According to Basilwizi organization which was been working closely with the VIDCO and WADCO structures, the WADCO was mostly dependent on issues that were brought on the agenda by the VIDCO. The WADCO only meets when there are issues to be discussed. The issues which have been on the WADCO agenda, raised by women at a WETF level and went through the VIDCO are the water and electricity problems in the wards. More details will be given later in this section.

The issues raised by women and taken for discussion at both at VIDCO and WADCO levels it is a sign that women are slowly and confidently articulating issues affecting them although this is attributed to Basilwizi Women Empowerment project. Basilwizi is running a Women Empowerment Project in which women are trained to engage their leaders on issues that affect them just like the water and electricity issues.

The RDDC is the highest organ in the district and it has the power and influence to deal and coordinate development programmes in the whole district. The committee is chaired by the District Administrator. It is comprises of various government departments, Faith based organizations, NGOs, Local business and Investors.

4.3 Access of local development decision making by women at village level

During the FGD it was indicated that when there is a committee to be set up or when there is a vacant position in one of the committees all people in that particular village are called to vote for the person they want regardless of gender. It was found that both women and men are given equally opportunities to be voted into those structures. For example if a committee/structure is composed of 6 people, 3 of the candidates have to be women while the other three should be men. The only structure which considers 100% of women representation is the WETF. Basilwizi as a Women empowerment organisation envisages seeing the gender policy guidelines to be implemented in support of women's access to local development decision making structures.

Table 3: Distribution of women and men accessing village development decision making in a comparative manner.

Decision making committee	Sex		Total
	m	f	
Women Empowerment Task Force	0	7	7
Home Based Care Givers	3	4	7
Water and Sanitation	6	1	7
Pre- school Committee	6	1	7
Child protection committee	5	2	7
Village watch dog	6	1	7
Village head	1	0	1
Total	27	16	43

Source: Field results.

The table shows the number of women and men who have managed to access local development decision making structures at one of the village called Bundimba in Sinakoma ward. The information was collected from various sources, which included the Basilwizi progress report for 2008, the Sinakoma chief's food relief register for 2008 and from the FGDs. The table shows that there are 16 women in various committee and 27 men in the same committees.

Despite all efforts being made by Basilwizi and the Ministry of Gender and Women Affairs, five women out ten informal interviewees said that women were still gripped with fear to take up decision making positions even at village level because this was new to them and they have never been seriously engaged in empowerment programmes. Seventeen out of twenty six FGDs participants stated that women have been affected by their historical background, in which after their displacement during the construction of the Kariba dam, successive governments did not pay attention to empowerment efforts for women. An unequal distribution of power has persisted for years without any solution to date. Much of the so-called 'development' aimed at empowering women can be traced to only few sympathetic churches rather than the government. Instead, Rural District Councils have implemented general development programmes.

In order to make a better comparison on whether women are accessing local development decision making structures both at VIDCO and WADCO it is perhaps important also to look at both tables 3 and 4 at village and ward levels.

4.3.1 Access of development decision making by women at Ward level
The table shows a number of women and men at ward level who are in decision making positions. The table was drawn on the basis of information collected from various sources which included Basilwizi progress report of 2009, the Musuna and Sinakoma councillors' registers which profiles of ward committees.

Table 4: **Distribution of women accessing ward development decision making structures compared to men.**

Decision making structure/institutions	Musuna ward			Sinakoma ward			Total	
	sex			sex				
	m	f	total	m	f	total	m	f
School Development Committee	4	3	7	5	2	7	9	5
CAMPFIRE	5	2	7	5	2	7	10	4
Water and Sanitation	6	1	7	4	3	7	10	4
Health Centre Committee	6	1	7	5	2	7	11	3
Child protection committee	5	2	7	4	3	7	9	5
Councillors	1	0	2	0	1	2	1	1
Village head	4	2	6	4	2	6	8	4
Chiefs	1	0	2	1	0	2	2	0
Social services committee	5	2	7	6	1	7	11	3
Total	37	13	50	34	16	50	71	29

Source: Fields results

Table 4 shows that there are more men in development decision making structures or positions as compared to women. In total there are 29 women from Musuna and Sinakoma wards as compared to 71 men from the two wards.

A reflection on table 3 indicates that there is a total of 16 women at village level who are in development decision making structures as compared to 27 men. The difference is not as big as what we see at ward level. This implies that as the development decision making structures get higher the number of women gets lower. During the FGDs the participants were asked to give their opinions for well pronounced difference. There were different answers given for these differences. Some of the answers were low level of education, lack of exposure, lack of self-confidence as mentioned earlier on and lack of policies with an affirmative action.

4.3.2 Access of development decision making by women at district level
According to this research the focus is not so much at the district level (RDDC in particular), however the chiefs and the councillors who were interviewed to give an over view of whether there were women accessing RDDC at the district level. It was found that there are at present only 5 women out of 20 members of the RDDC.

Further probing on why there were fewer women at the district level indicated that in both Musuna and SInakoma wards, Basilwizi organization was very active at the lower levels of decision making structures. Basilwizi has conducted many workshops in most areas to generate women's awareness to realise their own worthiness and potentials to participate in local development decision making structures. At the district level there were fewer women because as cited earlier on women lack higher education so they lack confidence to stand for higher and challenging positions. Many rural women are very busy with butter and bread

issues sustain their livelihood. It was stated that because of traditions and culture there are still some prejudices, that it is not normal and traditional for a woman to be spend most of her time in meetings when she should spend her time with children at home. It therefore means that the first thing to do is deal with those negative traditions to allow women access and participate in development structures.

Another observation was that even when opportunities were given to women to access the VIDCO, WADCO and RDDC, because of cultural practices, they still needed to ask for permission from their husbands in order to attend meetings and serve in VIDCO and WADCO. Out of the 26 FGD who were interviewed 10 women and 6 men all agreed that there was need for women to seek permission from their husbands before they attend any empowerment meetings otherwise this would be an automatic divorce. One woman representing the views of other 10 FGD members spelt out that it was difficult to attend meetings away from home as it is a looming risk for divorce. During the farming calendar if a woman goes to attend a workshop the husband orders other family members to leave a considerable portion for her attention. This also goes along with intra-household stigmatisation.

From the same group of participants in an FGD 20 out of 26 stated that most of the decisions are still a monopoly by the male counterparts who are already an empowered section of the community. The women participants gave examples of household issues where men are always dominating decisions. This is congruent with Cooke & Kothari's observation that the poor way of participation is exposed by development agencies that help empower the already powerful while the poor and marginalised are excluded (Cooke & Kothari 2001:8). A community comprises of numerous sections of people such as the disabled, men, women, children, the poor, the rich, among others, hence any development initiative and process that sidelines most sections of the community risks failure (Long 2001).

Of substantial value to note is that, women can access all other village and ward development decision making position except the position of a chief because this is beyond cultural boundaries. The position of a councillor can be filled by anyone be it a woman or a man. There is need for women to engage their traditional chiefs to change some of the negative cultural practices which hinder women empowerment.

4.3.3 Selection Criteria for women
Common responses across the two operational FDGs were that there are no requirements for one to be part of the VIDCO or WADCO. However maturity with an age of 18 and above has been cited as being a prerequisite for one to be part of the VIDCO or WADCO. However positions such as secretaries required a candidate to be literate. This was said to be important because a secretary should be able to read and write.

Despite that there are no written specific requirements for one to participate in decision making structures it was observed that most committees wanted to see both men and women who were dedicated and who have courage to lead others It was observed that at least all the 14 women who were either in the VIDCO or WADCO could read and write which was an indication that literacy was one of the requirements for women to be part of the decision making structures.

4.3.4 The process of decision making
The current local development decision making process starts from the grassroots that is the VIDCO and goes through WADCO up to the RDDC as explained earlier on in this document. For example issues such as water problems which have been cited earlier on are discussed at the VIDCO level and if there is no solution they are further referred to the WADCO which also refers them to the RDDC.
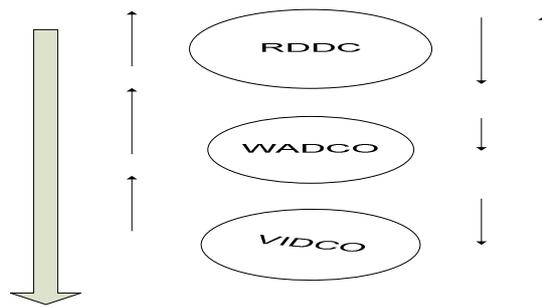
Figure 5: Process of decision making
Source: Field results

According to the fig above the thick arrow shows decisions that flow from the RDDC straight to the villages while the broken arrows next to the thick arrows are decisions that follow channels from the lowest structure VIDCO through the WADCO up to the RDDC. On the right hand side the dotted arrows show decisions flowing from the RDDC to the WADCO down to the VIDCO. The thin arrow also shows decisions that move straight from the VIDCO to the RDDC. The thick arrow on the left is showing that most of the decisions are dictated from above straight to the communities without following the correct channels.

FGD participants stated that while it was true decisions needed to start from the grassroots unfortunately most decisions were top down. Women need to be given space to express their preferences. If there is hardly any space for women to get their voice heard, and will be even harder for women to have their voice heard.

In most cases RDC authorities usually impose development decisions because it is known that women representation in development structures is very low, therefore they want to take advantage of their ignorance. In any case it would be prudent to expect women to know the process of decision making if no space is given for them to advance and push their preferences. It is rather unwise to expect women to be effective and to know the channels of decision making before they are empowered in the private world (Barr 1995:124). Without sufficient internal capacity for women's empowerment through their access and participation in the community based development decision making structures remains dependent on external influence.

4.4 Participation of women in local development decision making structures.

Participation can be achieved in several ways and one of the ways could be involving the women by forming groups and most of the indicators of participation usually focus on groups. For this reason most work on indicators of participation has focused on group formation as opposed to individual participation. The participation of women in this selection will focus on the following areas, attendance of women at development decision making meetings, level of input/ contribution by women.

4.4.1 Attendance by women at development decision making meetings
Attendance by women at local development meetings has significantly improved. Out of the 36 respondents who were interviewed in FGDs and those who were interviewed informally 26 of them confirmed that attendance of women had improved considerable as compared to 2006 up 2007. Some women shared their experiences about how attendance has improved as part of an on-going process of empowerment. It was stated that a woman is now endorsed to legitimately attend intensive courses, trainings and meetings away from home single-handedly or when the other partner is not involved and perhaps not an interested

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party. Until that time women would only attend meetings while at all times were accused of having slack morals and prospective adulterous.

However some respondents still regarded it normal to only wait to get updates from husbands on issues of development. One participant shared her experience that her husband used to constantly worry that meetings/workshops were for men not women. She used to be infuriated about such expressions and could become confrontational and antagonistic but later set on to fit into a place of dialogue with the husband after knowledge about lobbying skills at the workshop structured by Basilwizi Trust. She now boasts of a sensible and realistic achievement by profitably putting into custom lobbying skills and at present enjoys support from her husband who now helps administer her schedules and diary for meetings in the village.

Another lady participant in a focus group discussion spelt out that it was difficult to attend meetings away from home as it is a looming risk for divorce. During the farming calendar if a woman goes to attend a workshop the husband orders other family members to leave a considerable portion for her attention. This also goes along with intra-household stigmatisation.

As people whose socio-economic and political status is low in the Zambezi valley, women lack the awareness of their value, worth and potential. As a result of their own circumstances they become submissive accepting the domination older men and wishing to please them without any resistance. (ACPD 2006) As a result it has become a tradition that men are the ones who determine the destiny of women.

What it means is that although women can now attend meetings there is still need for awareness campaigns on the part of men so that they can appreciate the importance of women participation. The attendance by women in meetings is a sign of empowerment in the right direction because women can only know the gaps that surround them once they attend meetings. This is where they can get more information about their own empowerment through sharing of ideas. A table below shows the number of women who attended meetings compared to men.

Table 5: Attendance of women in workshops compared to attendance by men

Gender	3x2day Leadership & communication	2x 2day Quarterly & annual reflection meeting	8x2day advocacy training workshops	Totals	Percentage
women	88	31	267	386	43.4%
men	76	31	357	464	56.6%
Totals	416	62	624	850	100%

Source: Field results

During the 2008/2009 period a total of 770 (88 men & 76 women) under WEP were trained in leadership and communication and various advocacy related skills training while an additional 62 community members (31 female & 31 male) participated in the quarterly and annual reflection and learning workshops. The number of women who received training was 386 which, was 53.4% as compared to men who were 464 constituting 54.6% of the total number of participants. This was an increase as compared to the previous year 2008 where only 41.9% of the women received training. Although figures for the previous years could not be given participants also agreed with the improvement going on.

The general observation was that women can only attend local development meetings when these meetings are well planned with proper venues and distances from their homes.

Meetings that usually take long hours are poorly attended. At the same time meetings whose venues are too far are also poorly attended because women find it difficult to spend most of their time walking when they have other household chores to do at home. The observation was that all women who came early to the FGDs were those who lived nearer the venue.

4.4.2 Levels of input of women
According to the discussions held with FGD it was found that levels of input despite high attendance by women at meetings which were called by Basilwizi and the WETF were very low. It was even worse in meetings where they were combined with men. It was said that most women could bring issues which were at a household level, issues of fighting between a husband and a man.

It was also learnt that at village level where meetings are called by the RDC or NGOs to decide on a project for the women most decisions are imposed on the women without their input. The FGD participants said that top down development decisions as pointed out earlier on, were a handicap to their' input and empowerment . Most of the top down development decisions were caused by the fact local development decision makers such as the RDC and RDDC, have very limited time to consult the people at the grass root level. Because this approach it is hard for women to have their input incorporated into the plans. Women in the majority cases are the most affected because when it comes to voting for issues to be considered they are always out-numbered by men. In addition when local structures like the WADCO bring projects for women they enter into contracts with donors regarding the implementation of projects. As a result every project is time bound and these structures implement their projects hurriedly. They do not only allow women participate but to produce quick results to meet deadlines and to please their donors but also to qualify for further funding. They do not take into consideration the participation of women in making decisions for those projects. They feel this delays the project implementation processes.

Six out of ten informal interviewees raised a point in which they said women's input at development meetings was very low. It was stated that even when women have been voted into some local development decision making structures men tend to dominate and influence development initiatives that enter their communities. Local development decisions were dictated and influenced by men and these imposed decisions usually override community priorities or the elites who co-opt newly introduced development initiatives to further their own interests (Uphoff 1991:498). In most cases where men or the elites are the ones who make choices for the development initiatives, the reasons are clear. The elites not only want to realise project benefits but also want to ensure that their political influence is not easily challenged by the less influential because the more they dominate influential positions the more they retain their authority over women (Kumar & Corbridge 2002)

4.4.3 Levels of contribution /participation by women.
When Basilwizi management, together the VIDCO and WADCO chairpersons were asked about the about the levels of contributions of women during meetings it was revealed that women who had gone through their formal education from grade one to form four were more effective although this cannot be measured. Those women whose educational background was low usually lacked confidence and could hardly articulate themselves confidently throughout the meetings. It was learnt that participation by women was always hampered by lack of exposure by most women. Women have also been so used to development agencies that are fond of deciding who should participate if there was an evaluation of a women project. Development agencies have absolute control of financial resources which gives them enough decision making powers to guide not only the needs assessment process but also to decide who participates, what gets funded and what does not (Vincent 2004:113). Moreover, because of high levels of chronic poverty, women are compelled to accept whatever form of assistance is presented to them even when they have not participated.

At ward level women the few women who have been attending decision making meetings boast that they are now able to contribute confidently because they have learnt a lot from the WADCO meetings. One woman had this to say "After learning of women's rights to participate in development meetings organised by the Women Affairs Department in collaboration with Basilwizi I shared with my husband who was so supportive. My husband supports me in every aspect and I am not afraid of taking dual roles as a women. I am now the WADCO member and treasurer for the subcommittee for Heifer International and I was inaugurated as a village head recently. I feel the women's empowerment drive is on course but need many committed players and stakeholders".

The observation made about the participation of women was even low during the FGD meetings it was found that the few women who had been widely exposed were vibrant and could come up with convincing arguments during the discussions. For example the testimony given by the woman above shows that, women can also learn a lot from committees that are dominated by men. This therefore implies that there is still a need particularly for Basilwizi which has been dealing with empowerment projects of women to come up with strategies that can empower women for active participation and contributions during meetings. One of the strategies could be planning exchange visits to expose women to wide environment

4.5 Empowerment of women

Empowerment is not easy to measure because there is no universally agreed method. However based on the information from all the 42 respondents there were some indicators of empowerment of women taking place although the constraints that women face outweigh the actual outputs.

4.5.1 Women who are now occupying decision making positions
With a specific reference to table 3 and 4 as discussed before, there are now women in the VIDCO and WADCO structures occupying positions of influence. The numbers of women who are now in various decision making positions both at village and ward levels decision making structures are 46 while men are 98 totalling to 144. Where an individual represents a group of other women is also an indication of empowerment because it does not mean all women have to occupy positions of influence. In other ways when women are seen directly participating in development decision making structures that is an indicator of empowerment.

The ideas above are also supported by Chambers, (2007) who suggest that effective participation which leads to empowerment, coupled with sound local development decisions, women need to participate and must have equal opportunities to speak out freely and ownership needs to rest on them and this participation must eventually lead to their empowerment with good decisions. However one of the informal interviewees commenting on what the RDDC does in regards to the above statement was that at times the RDDC tends to act as a facilitator and listener in the process but should 'handover the relay "stick" to the women to do much on their own than just being mere spectators.

4.5.2 Self confidence of women in development decision making meetings
Women were asked to evaluate themselves in respect to their self confidence after being part of the village or ward development structures. Discussions revealed that self confidence was still an issue, because most of those committees where women are position holders men happen to be the chairpersons. Self confidence as already pointed out in the section cannot be built in a day. It therefore means that women need to continuously attend meetings and practise as they lead others. It was also during the meeting with FGDs observed that those who had a certain level of education and those women who had been in village and ward level committees for a long time were confident than others. It was difficult to really come up

with exact figures of women who felt they were confident and could confidently articulate issues that affect them.

4.5.3 Positive change in women as a result of empowerment
Women who were in the FGDs shared their experience about what is making them different in respect to their empowerment after being part of decision making structures both at village and ward levels. Women had to share their experiences about the change that has taken place as a result of their involvement in decision making structures as follows;

"At the beginning I never really appreciated the Basilwizi Women Empowerment programme as I thought it was meant to scare the "standard" family setting and cause clamour and conflict. The approach which Basilwizi used was appealing as it was so involving and even local leaders were engaged. The approach was to encourage all women to participate in local decision making committees.

My husband was very negative and downbeat about the programme as he resolutely believed the project was going to cause pandemonium leading to a divorce. He was adamant and insensitive about my inspiration to attend such meetings. I became confrontational and this did not help matters as he thought he was being stripped off his authority as head of the family. After attending a meeting on advocacy and lobbying, I used the skills to confer and negotiate with him that I understood his concerns and how he felt about the whole thing at the same time tabling my scheme of civic and development work. An agreement was reached finally although primarily harbouring reservations. I managed to attend a workshop in Bulawayo in 2006 and I was the only women in attendance out of 35 men and I was intensely pregnant (7 months) by then. I made sure my husband was well appraised of the agenda of whatever event I attended, I could feedback constantly and because of that approach he is now supportive of my efforts as I was unanimously voted the chairperson of the Women Task Force of Basilwizi. My husband in this point of fact now manages my schedule for meetings and I am proud that am leading a big group without fear of being despised. The other wife of my husband also benefited from my efforts and she is also allowed to attend the meetings I lead on women empowerment"
Another woman who is one of the WADCO members had this to say during a workshop she conducted on child abuse and protection as shown by the picture.
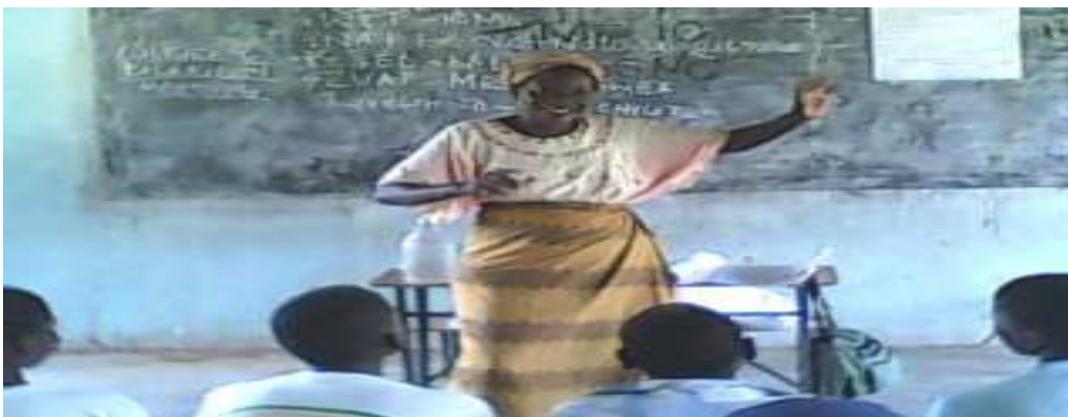
Figure 6: A WADCO conducting a workshop on child abuse and protection
Source: Field results

A woman above requested to be taken photography while she conducted a workshop had this to share about how she feels about being empowered;
"I'm very grateful about the WETF and I wish all women could benefit from this. I used to have a stage fright and could not express myself fully. This was a disease, a big ailment

which I had to endure for many years. It was not common among for a woman like me to stand head above shoulders in front of a group of people let alone men. I was a quiet and very shy woman but after attending meeting by WETF a committee which gives a platform for women to discuss their concerns, I was transformed and I now energetically participate in groups which are even dominated by men. I now hold several positions in. I'm a chairperson for Concern World Wide and a committee member for the WADCO. I also conduct workshops on child protection. I'm very devoted and resolute in my posts. I now understand diverse functions played by all the elaborate and intricate roles in a standard committee".

Another woman in a focussed group discussion in Musuna had this testimony about her experience;
"I am grateful of the efforts of Basilwizi Trust because after I attended a meeting in 2008 in leadership skills I felt rejuvenated and aimed at taking a post that was naturally reserved for masculine characteristics. I advocated for my vision and pursued it and I was appointed a neighbourhood watch associate and I was also affiliated to the headman's law enforcement and protection unit. I got marvellous support from my female counterparts who lobbied for female representation in challenging positions and my husband also supports me in this regard. I am serving my community and am not ashamed".

Rosemary Shoko narrated the noteworthy change that took place as a result of the women empowerment programme in Hwange district said,

"I used to attend meetings since time immemorial in my village but when I got married to this community my enthusiasm dwindled merely I was a daughter in-law. This society almost disabled me. After I was voted as a secretary in the school development committee   I vividly scaled up my efforts to advocate for meaningful representation of females in leadership roles. I was voted village head thereafter of Musuna – Sinebbimbi village. I now feel equally central as men, as opposed to scenarios back then when women would just be figureheads and play docile roles in institutional structures. I wish I could be young again and go to school as the only challenge is my illiteracy which is quite evident in district meetings at Hwange urban."

Margaret Sianzungunya said,
"I used to take it normal and regular for a woman to take a docile role in decision making. I was wrong. I was taken to Harare to attend training on women and development under the auspices of Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) for one and a half months. My husband was influenced by the community to keep watch as such showing was an indicator of infidelity. After Basilwizi introduced the WEP my husband was drawn in and he became supportive and permits me to attend meetings even if he is not at home. I am in the task force which is currently engaging Save the Children for assistance for a secondary school building. I have so many accolades on my belt in the community for advocacy and lobbying" She added, "It was difficult to talk in front of men but when I attended a leadership skills workshop I was transformed and now spearheading the crusade for the women's rights.

A woman participant who was interviewed as an informal discussion in Sinakoma area said
"To be candid enough I was allotted village head during the hostile political environment and I was rebuked and I almost gave up but through knowledge and the way I was capacitated by Basilwizi Trust I maintained my foot firm on the ground and now lead 25 households as village head. On the bad note, I was dropped from the Women Task Force in Sinakoma as members unfairly cited political inclinations and surely I failed to use these skills to contest as I don't know who to engage as the issue is purely opinionated. It is not only me but more women are involved in politics and governance issues." There is a lot of work to be done in the programme as men in politics still oppress us. If I call the entire village for a meeting I face a challenge and resistance as it is the monopoly of men with political muscles to do so."

As seen from the testimonies from the women themselves, who are in decision making structures, a certain level of empowerment is taking place. When the 26 FGD were asked whether they can now safely say they are fully empowerment. Only 8 women out of the other 14 women confidently said they were confident that they were empowerment, the other women cited many constraints of which some of them have already been mentioned. These constraints included lack of exposure, confidence, domination by men and the elites, development agencies, cultural barriers, poverty, and the political environment in Zimbabwe among other things. This therefore means that we need to be careful when we talk of empowerment, sometimes we may be carried away and think empowerment has taken place all over the place because of only a small number of people witnessing a considerable improvement.

Informal interviewees were asked why they thought empowerment was important for them They reiterated that women need the support of their leaders to participate in decision-making structures so that they can serve as role models to forth coming generations of boys and girls. This is in support of Jocelynne Scutt's comment from Australia where she said,

"If men alone are seen to be making decisions of public importance, then girls and boys, women and men can be led into believing that women have no legitimate place in such decision-making. This then has a self-fulfilling effect, meaning that girls and women do not see themselves as 'important' decision-makers and neither do men and boys; and men and boys are legitimated in 'keeping women and girls out' of decision-making positions." (ILO, 2004)

4.6 Effectiveness of women after being empowered

4.6.1 Issues on the agenda, identified by women for engagement with their local leadership.

Effectiveness of women is seen by the number of issues that have been identified by women themselves for engagement with their leadership. The following were issues which were raised by women for engagement with both the VIDCO and WARDCO levels.

The issue on electricity, water and menace wild animals which have destroyed field crops in have been raised by women. The background information to these issues according to the FGDs is that water for domestic use in Sinakoma and Musuna is a 'rare commodity', yet Lake Kariba is just a stone's throw away from the resettlement areas. Ironically, the present government is currently debating plans to pump water all the way from the Zambezi River to Bulawayo (over 480kms away). Moreover, as part of this new water scheme, the Tonga people will be displaced yet again to accommodate a proposed "green belt" that will run from the Zambezi River to Bulawayo when the women in the Zambezi continue to face water challenges.

The other issue which has been on the WETF agenda and also taken up by women for discussion at the VIDCO level is the electrification programme. The Rural Electrification Programme, currently underway in Zimbabwe, is being implemented in other parts of the country, sidelining the places where the people displaced by the Kariba Hydro-electricity Scheme were resettled. The people who paved way for the generation of that electricity continue to fetch firewood for cooking and live in darkness yet other rural people who were not even affected by the Kariba dam have their growth points/district centres, and even homesteads, electrified under the Rural Electrification Programme. Women have raised the issues at the village level. Further probing on the issues that were raised revealed that these issues were raised after Basilwizi had held a meeting on advocacy and lobby; it is during this period that women put the issues on the agenda. It was learnt that there has been no serious follow ups on these issues by women themselves.

The most important of the positive outputs of the women in the study areas are those which show how leadership and the provision of the basic information or skills had a major impact on women to present their priority needs to their leaders. In particular it is impressive the way in which women are using the information acquired through leadership and communication workshops to tackle their own problems. Equally important are the issues for engagement which they have identified and have submitted to Basilwizi for guidance during their lobby process. For example, The Musuna women submitted requests to Basilwizi for training workshops on leadership and communication and to clarify the roles and functions of the newly elected CAMPFIRE committee. Through the help of Basilwizi the Musuna women managed approach Ministry of Education authorities to recruit local teachers so that their children are taught in their mother tongue although this is a contradiction to was raised by one women in a meeting where she wanted children to be taught only in English.

According to Basilwizi progress reports 2008-2009 and testimonies from FGDs women through the WETF in Musuna have been able to approach their VIDCO leadership to consider building a clinic. The nearest clinic was 20 km away from Musuna. The issue was then referred to the WADCO which also approached the Hwange RDC over the issue. A satellite clinic has been established although it is not yet ready for use. Women from Sinakoma and Musuna have also taken up the issue of water shortage and electricity as discussed earlier on.

4.7 How socio-economic factors are impacting on the empowerment of women in local development decision making structures.

Twenty six FGD participants were asked to give their opinions about what they thought were socio economic factors impacting on women empowerment.

Table 6: FGD participants to state socio -economic factors impacting on women empowerment

Response	Frequency(n-26)
political	7
cultural	6
Socio economic	6
institutional	7

Source Field results

From the table above, four factors have been identified as having an impact on the empowerment of women as discussed below.

4.7.1 Political factors
Common responses across the two operating areas from two FGDs revealed that the politicization of the Empowerment of Women issue along party and/or ethnic lines is a challenge in the current political environment in Zimbabwe. Past experience shows that non-governmental organizations, particularly those involved in Empowerment programmes have come under severe criticism from the government. This is likely to continue if the current state of national political instability remains. The FGD participants said that, careful consideration has to be taken to develop strategies for minimizing any potential interference and avoiding a misinterpretation of the role of any organization dealing with issues related to empowerment programmes in both the long and short term. Organizations dealing with women empowerment projects should try to minimise the threats by creating links with the political figures and Local authorities.

It was stated that the political environment in Zimbabwe stifles the freedoms of assembly, coupled by state suspicion of NGOs, has always hindered the people to associate with development agencies as it is feared that they might be supporters of the Opposition parties. This is one factor that has stifled programmes aimed at assisting women step up in participation of development decision making structures. When the FGDs were asked to give examples why they were saying the political environment was a disturbance to women empowerment. It was said that the existence of ruthless politicians particularly the war veterans made it difficult for women to attend development meetings as they persistently demanded police approval of all gatherings and agendas.

4.7.2 Socio -economic factors
Six out of ten informal interviewees who were approached to give their opinions on how socio economic factors had an impact on women empowerment said that high levels of illiteracy was one of them although this has been repeated now and then. In a separate meeting with informal interviewees fourteen women who were part of FGDs said that they managed to occupy positions of decision making at village and ward levels partly because they had attained a minimum level of education and most of the other women who were illiterate usually refused to take up any positions. In the same discussion it was said that women depended entirely on their husbands for their economic needs it was always best for them to attend development meetings only when they authorized. This is in line with Made and Mpofu (2005:4) who observe that economic dependency of women and societal norms in Zimbabwe, position most rural women under men. Women lack human agency of decision-making in economic, social and political issues affecting their lives both at home and community level because men has to authorize or object any initiative because man has the economic muscle.

The FGDs in answering the question about why there were few women in then WADCO and RDDC structures. Linked to socio economic factors twenty one participants out of twenty six repeated what they had said earlier on. They said that despite the fact that women constitute more than 50% of the Zimbabwean population, they continue to be denied equal opportunities to exercise their rights in decision formulation because of culture, discrimination by men. It was said the widows and female headed were the worst victims. There are several causes to such a scenario attributed to social injustices, culture and discrimination (ZHDR, 2000). Masendeke (2005:13) agrees that most female populations particularly in the rural areas are poor. However, female-headed households are the poorest, with those headed by widows as the most affected. Female-headed household's poverty status emanates from the social exclusion of women's participation in decision-making processes, to influence development policy and practice. Poverty is a gendered concept, which some critics believe women empowerment is the only panacea to poverty reduction (Made and Mpofu, 2005:5).

However, despite existence of women at the village levels, global efforts lack knowledge not only on how, in practice, women may be better protected but also on how their participation in national and local development initiatives may be facilitated (Ghai 2001:25). This has been further worsened by the women's varied interests from one community to another coupled with different and complex socio-economic and political situations surrounding them in various parts of the districts. From the participants who attended the FGDs observations showed that there were no widows in the group because most of the women who were in FGDs kept on referring to their husbands. The poor usually do not attend meetings and come in the open that is why they have no interest to occupy any public positions.

4.7.3 Cultural factors
Culture is a major constraint which poses threat to most women in the study areas, from combating gender discrimination and enjoying their human rights to place their demands through participation in decision making processes. For example daughters in law in Musuna

area have not moved an extensive distance from the cultural bondage and repression as a consequence they are not expected to take part in decision making processes at community level even after intervention by Basilwizi Trust's women empowerment programme. Decision making is still the monopoly of the male counterpart and women still seem as inaudible and indistinct subjects even in the recent past. For example the information collected from Basilwizi projects staff indicated that from 2007 to 2009 out of the 573 people who were trained in lobby and advocacy skills only 99 (17.28%) were women and 474 (83.72%) were men as illustrated in the pie chart below.
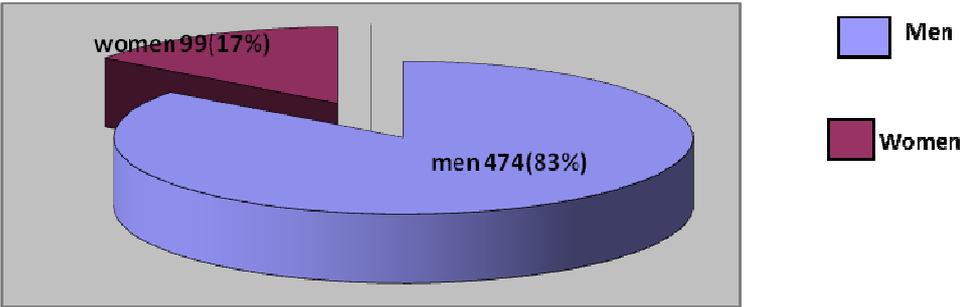

Figure 7: Meeting attendance of women
Source: Basilwizi progress report 2008

According to key informants at the RDDC it was felt that the society is dominated by men this has influence in the villages and wards. Women are marginalized in decision making and leadership by a variety of processes that begin at infancy. The key informants commented that women lacked experience of decision making and leadership in the public situations because girls, in contrast to boys, are groomed to play passive roles and given little opportunity to make decisions or develop decision making skills outside the family context. Girls are mostly kept within the immediate environment of the family where they are protected and taught to accept the decisions that others, make on their behalf. As a result of girls' lack of experience in a public context due to negative cultural practices, leads to their lack of self-confidence and skills needed to function effectively in decision making processes.

Participation in local development decision making process does not happen in a vacuum but is influenced by a number of factors, ranging from people's interests and attitudes to national policies. Responses across the operational areas of Basilwizi where this study was carried out indicated that women were the direct victims of high levels of illiteracy which made it difficult for them to participate effectively in development decision making processes.

From the societal front, culture has had a more pronounced influence in the participation of women in development programmes. For example although it is culturally acceptable in the Zambezi Valley to have mixed community meetings/workshops which are attended by both women and men of diverse age groups (Debrabandere and Desmet, 1998:105), the extent to which women attend and participate is limited due to cultural edifices.

4.7.4 Institutional factors

Institutional factors have a bearing on women participation in decision making processes.

Fifteen out of twenty six FGDs cited long distances to meetings to as being one of the contributing factors why women fail to attend meeting where they are supposed to attend women empowerment workshops. Chambers is more critical and concerned about the distances women have to attend workshops which may stretch for the whole day. Mostly it is the poorest women who live   far away from the centre or the road. They are socially excluded as these meetings tend to be conducted near the road or within the centre (Chambers, 1998). Most of the meetings are conducted at a clinic, school or church building where it is believed it is a central venue. However, some villagers may not attend because those same venues may be far away from their homes. Those who attend may delay or request to be released early before the agreed finishing time. Such venues are inconvenient for meetings and usually because of multiple household roles that women have they may decide not to attend at all.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an analysis of the research findings; this chapter closes the study with a roundup of main arguments and conclusions. In light of the above analysis and discussions, made from the preceding chapter as supported by the two selected operational wards of Basilwizi, provides the conclusion of the research findings. Empowerment of women through access and participation in local development decision making structures is not easy to measure new as reflected by the academic theories. There could be some indicators of empowerment demonstrated in one aspect of women's access and participation in development decision making structures but this does not mean there is absolute empowerment. Of substantial and considerable value to note is that there are many factors that negatively impact women empowerment as seen in the study.

The study has highlighted both the success and failure of women empowerment through their access and participation in development decision making structures. It was found that in the entire three main local development decisions making structures (VIDCO, WADCO, RDDC) which, have been identified in this study, although the focus was on the first two, the majority of the women are found at the lowest level called VIDCO. When the ladder of development decision making structures goes higher the number of women in those structures goes down The fact that women are found in decision making structures is a step ahead in the right direction because in the past years before 2006 when Basilwizi Empowerment Programme started it was hard for women to access development decision making structures. The reasons being that because of traditions and culture there were still some prejudices that it is not normal for women to hold positions of influence, women were supposed to occupy most of their time on household chores. For example daughters in laws in Musuna community are not allowed to take part in any development structures just because of some negative traditional and cultural practices. As result men have been taking a predominant role in the VIDCO and WADCO structures.

One other observation is that the attendance of women in meetings has drastically improved as opposed to the previous years when it was difficult for women to attend meetings away from home as it was a looming risk for divorce. It is interesting to note that in some areas like Sinakoma as opposed to Musuna area some of the negative attitudes that men have towards women's attendance and participation is slowly dying as reflected in the testimonies given by women themselves. Women were always accused of weak loose morals and prostitution for attending meetings during the absence of their husbands. There is a great improvement although women still depend on men for their permission to attend meetings. From the FGD the improvement on women attendance in meeting was largely attributed to WEP by Basilwizi which conducted a wide spread rights awareness campaigns on women empowerment.

However, empowerment of women by their attendances may not be the only best way to measure the achievement of women. Meaningful and effective empowerment should be measured in combination with other factors such as their contributions or quality of their inputs and expression of self confidence. It is a looming risk to make conclusions based on a single outcome. This is supported by Mayoux who stated that, effective participation of women should not be judged by the numbers that attend development gatherings/meetings although that forms part of the measurement (Mayoux 1995: 251). If women are expected to be effective and empowered, they need to undergo an intensive training so that they are in a better position to understand why they are making decisions and whose purpose will those decisions serve. Tailor made programmes should be designed to help them make choices that can enable them to even challenge unfair practices and cultural barriers which hinder their process of empowerment before they are emancipated (Barr, 1995)

Also noted in the findings few women who were part of the WETF were now able to articulate issues of concern which they had to put on the VIDCO agenda for discussion. Issues such as shortage of water, electricity problems and reports about menace wild animals were raised by women themselves and taken for engagement with the local leadership in the VIDCO structures. This is one way we could measure the possible progress towards realisation of women empowerment indicators.

It is important also to mention that even when women were voted into those development structures and some of them engaging the local leadership on issues that directly affect them, continued to be constrained by various factors which include the political situation, socio-economic, cultural and institutional factors. For instance in Zimbabwe, currently there are many restrictive governance laws which donot give space to women empowerment, as the government perceives this can lead to uprisings. Therefore because of the sensitive nature of women empowerment projects it is sometimes difficult to bring empowerment to their footsteps. There are of course other factors which include stereotypes, lack of education and exposure, fear to stand for elections, lack of information about women and how they can be capacitated, lack of awareness of their worthiness and potentials, perceived inferiority complex towards men and the restriction on their movements outside the home. As such their needs and priorities remain unaddressed.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions the following are recommendations;
Information sharing
Information sharing to have consequential and momentous coverage is at a low level therefore there is need for the local authorities and local based organisations to encourage the production of sufficient information material alongside the women empowerment campaign programmes in order to reach out more women and to generate a wide spread awareness on women's rights to participation in decision making processes.

5.2.1 Engagement with traditional leadership
A continuous engagement of the traditional chiefs so that they can revisit some of the negative cultural practices which hinder effective participation of women in decision making processes since they are the custodians of culture is critical. Possibly, inviting traditional chiefs for exposure visits for the look and learns arrangements and appreciates what other communities are doing in terms of observing the rights of a woman.

5.2.2 Introducing a quota system
It is important perhaps to introduce a quota system to allow women occupy positions of influence at a ward and district levels. This can result in a sharp increase in the number of women decision makers and can provide an important training ground for women to move on to higher levels of decision making and leadership .

5.2.3 Minimising political inteference
The politicisation of the Empowerment of Women issue along party and/or ethnic lines is a challenge in the current political environment in Zimbabwe. Past experience shows that non-governmental organizations, particularly those involved in Women empowerment programmes have come under severe criticism from the government. This is likely to continue if the current state of national political instability remains. Therefore, careful consideration has been given to developing strategies for minimising any potential conflict and avoiding a misinterpretation of the role of the Basilwizi Trust in both the long and short term. Basilwizi tries to minimise the threats by sharing their reports with the local authorities and trying to involve them as much as possible and in some cases they could try to have joint planning meetings.

Basilwizi as an organisation spearheading Women Empowerment project, already has strong community-based support amongst the traditional leaders it also receives support from influential clergy and some of the political figures on a national level through its association with the Ministry of Gender and faith based organisations. Therefore such contacts could be used to generate further support from the national structures to advance the plight of women.

5.2.4 Conclusion

Although there is progress in the right direction in the empowerment process of women in the Zambezi valley of Musuna and Sinakoma women still need more decision making power through access and participation in local development decision making structures to enable them determine their own preferences, needs and concerns. The nature of socio economic factors which constrain women from participating and accessing development decision making structures are so challenging that they need the full support and continuous commitment of the women themselves so that they take their own empowerment on the centre stage of development. That also stands to reason that sustainable empowerment has to be internally driven, it should not come from outside.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Primary references

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Annex 2: Interview guide for key informants

Basilwizi Women Empowerment Project Assessment and Analysis

My name is Maxwell Dodo Munenge, a Professional Masters Student in Management of Development (Specialisation: Social Inclusion, Gender and Rural livelihoods at Van Hall Larenstein University; Wageningen, Netherlands.
The purpose of this interview guide is to solicit views in respect to the impact of Basilwizi Women Empowerment Project which was implemented from 2006-2009. You have been selected to be one of the respondents because of your knowledge and experience in the related topics. For ethical considerations identity, sensitive material will remain confidential and anonymous in the reports unless you would like to be acknowledged. Participation in this study is voluntary.
This set of questions is not exhaustive. Any information you provide will be of great substantial value to the study. While I am interested in gathering examples of good practice, I am also keen to hear about gaps or even where things have not gone well as these are also examples we can learn from.

Name of interviewer--
Sex---
Date---
Time of interview--
Name of respondent---
Name of organisation--
Occupation/Designation---
Years of experience in related topics.---
Area of operation--

Participation of women in decision making strucutures.
Access
1. Which local development decision making structures are found in the communities where you operate?
2. Who is involved?
3. What is the process of decision making?

4. If women are involved what is their profile

5.What are the requirements/ criteria for participation eg being literate, age
Participation

6How is the attendance of women in development decision making meetings?

7. What changes have come as a result of women's participation in decision making structures?

8. How is the inputs of women in meetings ?

9. What is the level of women's participation

10. What socio economic factors impacting on women empowerment?

11Do you have any suggestions on how women could participate better in development decision making structure?

Empowerment
12. Are there any women in decision making structures? explain

13.How is their confidence during meetings?

13 What knowledge and skills do they have as areslut of their empowerment?

19.In your opinion can you say women are now empowered to make development decisions.? Briefly explain

20. Please add any other information that might be of great substantial value.

Annex 3: **Check list with semi structured questionnaires**

Participation of women in local development decision making structures.

1.Which local development decision making structures are found in the communities?
2.Who are more in accessing development decision making between men and women?
3.Is there any equality in accessing decision making between men and women?
4.Are there any different criteria for women and men to become a member of the decision making structure?
5.What is the process of decision making?
6.What are the requirements for participation ?
7.Who is involved in the decision making ?
8.For the decision making structures mentioned e how many women are involved?
9.What are the positions of women in the decision making structures ?
10.How long have the women been in the positions of decision making ?
11.How did the women become part of the structure. ?
12.What changes have come as a result of women's participation in decision making processes?
13.Is the change being felt in Sinakoma and Hwange wards and other communities in the Zambezi Valley?
14.If any change in what way has this change come about?
15.Who benefited from this change?
16.In your opinion can you say women are now empowered to make development decisions.? Briefly explain
17.Was this change foreseen during decision making processes? Explain
18.If there are no changes why are there no changes? Explain
19..Are there any factors which enabled or deterred women's participation in decision making processes?
20.Do you have any suggestions on how you could participate better in decision making.
21.Are women consulted when development decision are flow
22.How does the process of decision making flow?
23.Are there any dev elopement decision making that have been made by women?
24.If yes what are those development decisions?
25.Which of those development decisions have been considered for implementation?
26.If no why have the decisions not been considered? Please explain
27Is there any need for improvement in the way both men and women are involved in decision making processes? Please explain
28How is attendance of women and men in development meetings
29.Are women involved in the implementation of decisions? Explain how they are involved
30Do women have control over development decisions?

Please add any other information which you think might be of great substantial value.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Annex 4: Letter seeking for permission to conduct the research

University of Applied Sciences

VAN HALL LARENSTEIN

PART OF WAGENINGEN UR

Date: July 5 2010

To whom it may concern

Van Hall Larenstein (VHL) University of Applied Sciences is part of Wageningen University and Research, the Netherlands. VHL conducts two Master degree courses:
- Management of Development with specializations in: Social inclusion, Gender and Rural Livelihoods, HIV/AIDS and Food security;
- Agricultural Production Chain Management with specializations in: horticultural chains, livestock chains and post harvest technology and logistics.

Mr Maxwell Dodo Munenge is a student of the 2009-2010 cohort.

All our students conduct a thesis to complete their studies, and most of them go back for field work to their home country to collect data in the months of July and August 2010.

We kindly ask you to facilitate our students in case that is convenient to you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Robert Baars