"Treating the causes instead of the symptoms"

An ethnographic-case study on the implications of working with a rights-based approach to advance gender-equality in Ankober, Ethiopia

Hanna Stam

July, 2013

WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY
WAGENINGEN UR

MSc thesis Wageningen University

Title	"Treating the causes instead of the symptoms"
Sub-title	An ethnographic-case study on the implications of working with a rights-based approach to advance gender-equality in Ankober, Ethiopia
Date	July, 2013
Student	Hanna Stam
Student number	850225794080
Department	Department of Social Sciences
Chair-group	Rural Development Sociology
Thesis code	RDS-80433
Supervisor	Dr. Alberto Arce

WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY
WAGENINGEN UR

Abstract

This thesis presents an ethnographic case-study on the implications of following a rights-based approach in advancing women's rights and gender quality through the establishment of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in the Ankober region, Ethiopia. It is the result of three months fieldwork in Addis Ababa and three months in the Ankober region. Four CBOs in different situations that emerged within the same program were examined. The methods used consisted of document review, observation and formal and informal interviews. The premises of the right-based approach, identified by its proponents, are that the poor and marginalized, in this case women, organized as CBOs will be empowered to claim their rights in the future and hold institutions or governments accountable to respond to these claims, altering unequal power-relations in the process. This thereby lays the attention on addressing the causes of poverty rather than treating the symptoms. The results of this study however indicate that in practice the rights based approach was not fully understood by the people involved in its implementation and different translations of the policies were seen in the field. Government involvement in the program led in three situations to government bodies co-opting, directing and complicating the establishment processes of the CBOs. This study showed how this potentially led to inequality rather than equality for women in the region. Involvement of the government was only crucial when it concerned the provision of legal and moral assistance alone rather than other forms of involvement. Furthermore, the focus in the program on establishing independent organizations and increasing the capacities of the women to make their own decisions was ineffective to alter existing gender-relations if the underlying more structural causes of the sub-ordination of women was not addressed. Situations in which there was a focus mainly on economic empowerment alone in the CBOs showed that while the women were able to recognize new opportunities, and "exercise agency and choice" in the economic spheres, unequal gender-relationships were not necessarily altered. The lack of understanding about unequal gender-relations was identified as a main reason for the choices to focus on economic empowerment in three situations in the program. The results of this study thus imply that to enhance gender-equality with a rights-based development program the structural subordination of women and the construction of the power-relationships needs to be better understood and integrated in the development programs. This argument is strengthened by one situation of a CBO in the program that showed that a focus on the internal alteration of gender-perceptions combined with enhancing the capacities of the women to act in economic, social and political spheres was more successful in advancing women's rights and the alteration of unequal power-relationships enhancing gender-equality. Finally, the creation of a network including religious and traditional influential leaders strengthened the women in their effort to enhance the position of women in the society.

Keywords: Right-Based Approach, Women's rights, Empowerment, Accountability, Gender Equality

Preface

To finalize my master in international development studies I searched for a research opportunity in which I could study a development program in practice. In cooperation with Otherwise, an organization in Wageningen, I contacted PADet a local NGO in Ethiopia which invited me to analyse their program in Ankober. My journey began when I arrived in Addis Ababa, where I first started an 4 month internship during which I could start this research. After this great time in which I started to be more familiar with the country I went to the rural area of Ankober and here the real adventure started. It was both challenging as rewarding to be able to live for 3 months in the area. It was rewarding because I met wonderful people who taught me about their way of life and shared their life-stories, hopes, dreams but also their worries. It also taught me more about myself, my background, my capacities to do research and how I coped with diverse circumstances. It was challenging because it was lonely without communication with my friends or family to share these experiences and I had to find my way in this environment with only very basic conditions. Now in July 2013 the journey comes to an end with this thesis which is my final assignment for graduating in Rural Development Sociology.

Utrecht, July 2013
Hanna Stam

Table of Content

List of Figures

Figure 1 is retrieved from http://www.plosone.org. All other figures are pictures taken by the author

List of Abbreviations

CBO	Community Based Organization
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HTP	Harmful Traditional Practices
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
WWG	Women Watch Group
UN	United Nations

Chapter 1

Introducing the right-based direction in development programs of NGOs

This thesis is the result of a six month study (January until august 2012) in Addis Ababa and the Ankober Woreda[1] in Ethiopia. The study is executed in cooperation with a development organization, registered and legalized as local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Ethiopia. The local NGO, in cooperation with an international donor initiated a development program following a rights-based approach to development in the Ankober Woreda in 2005. In this program several women Community Based Organizations (CBOs) were established to enhance processes of change that would benefited the most marginalized of society. Women were identified as a marginalized group. The women CBOs were seen as partly successful by the local NGO. I was asked to study the underlying dynamics that led to dissimilar situations of the CBOs established in different locations within the same program and all guided by ideas of rights-based development. After exploring research this became a study to understand the implications of working with the rights-based approach in the establishment processes of the CBOs in the Ankober Woreda.

This study, an ethnographic case-study, explored the implications of the rights-based approach to alter unequal gender-relations in practice. Four women CBOs in different locations, each established in the program in the Ankober Woreda, were examined. The translations of the local NGO field officers of the program policies and the interactions and negotiations between the different actors (program officers, government officials, members of the CBOs and others involved) were central in the analysis. This thesis will discuss the difficulties to translate the rights-based approach into actual practices that enhance accountability, empowerment and participation in a way that leads to more gender-equality and thus altering unequal power-relations. As will be described in this introduction the alteration of unequal power-relations is a major premise advocated by proponents of the rights-based approach. Finally solutions are sought for the gap that currently exists between right-based theory and the actual practices as seen in Ankober. Finally, suggestions which could close the current gap between rights-based theory and the actual practice, as observed in Ankober, will be presented.

1.1 Theoretical background of the right-based directions

In the last fifteen years, especially since the 1990s, the rights-based approach has emerged as new direction in development (Kindornay, et al, 2012). The new direction arose from different lines of development thinking and various development actors, including the United Nations (UN) and large NGOs such as Care, Oxfam and ActionAid are nowadays working with their interpretation of a rights-based approach. In this section I will sketch some historical traits and main ideas of the approach.

---

[1] A Woreda is an administrative region in Ethiopia consisting of several towns/villages which are called Kebeles.

Furthermore I will discuss the feminist view on this new development direction and finally unanswered questions in the right based theories related to this research are outlined.

1.1.1 Right-based programs and the NGOs territory in development

While human rights discourses similar to most development discourses can be traced back to the 1940s, rights and development were seen as separate domains for most part of the history of development aid. From the 1990s the two separate domains started to merge (Cornwall and Molyneux, 2006; Kindornay, et al, 2012), and the first formulations of rights-based approaches to development were made in the international sphere in the mid-1990s (Kindornay, et al, 2012). Here I will elaborate on how and why this approach emerged and has been increasingly used in development programs of NGOs.

The space for NGOs to manoeuvre in development policy cycles has increased significantly in the 1980s (Knutson, 2009). In the neo-liberal years of the 1980s the market was seen as the main driver of development (Peet and Hartwick, 2009). Neoliberal ideas furthermore implied that this market should control and operate the development process without interference of the state (McGee, 2004). During these years the numbers of NGOs multiplied rapidly (Knutson, 2009) and were progressively more called the ideal vehicles to counter the state and to promote the private initiative (Reimann, 2006). The focus on economic growth models and the neo-liberal policies became more and more criticised though. Critiques also increased on the practices of NGOs which were drawn into providing services in line with the structural adjustment programs and many organizations started to search for a more alternative position (Bebbington, Hickey, and Mitlin 2007 cited in Mitlin and Hickey, 2009). Broader understandings of poverty and poverty reduction came into existence, and concepts as livelihoods, social capital (Harris-Curtis 2005), participation and accountability rose to the scene. Harris-Curtis 2005 mentioned that many of these concepts came together into what is known as the sustainable livelihood approach, which was the bridge towards the discourse of rights in development (Conway et al. 2002 cited in Harris-Curtis 2005).

Another critical shift in development thinking that also became prominent in the 1990s, related to the criticism on the neo-liberal agenda of the 1980s, was the renewed focus on the state and the rise of ideas on democracy and good-governance (Cammack, 2003 cited in McGee, 2004; Knutsson, 2009). The "new policy agenda" was reflected in poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP) pursued by the financial institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and inter-governmental bodies such as the UN (Mohan, 2002). One of the main ideas behind the PRSP was that government processes that include civil society organizations would drive towards social, economic and political change (Suleiman, 2011). Mitlin and Hickey (2009) identify the complexity of these democratisation processes, disappointment with the new democratic states and concerns about the policies of states led to increased consciousness about international processes and structures in relation to human rights. In addition they pointed out an increased awareness that more systematic change was needed in development

aid. Ideas about rights-based development thus emerged from debates on renewed understandings of poverty-reduction beyond economic growth, democracy debates and the realization more structural change was needed to tackle problems with poverty.

The end of the cold-war (1991) is seen as an important transition moment of development programs into the human rights domain (Ljungman, 2004; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, 2005). Reason given by Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi (2005) is that before the cold-war ended there was much contestation over the status of economic and social rights, which were referred to as socialist agendas. Much of this contestation resolved after the threat of socialist ideologies had diminished. This, Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi stated, made it possible to have a comprehensive idea encompassing all rights as being interconnected (civil, political, economic, social and cultural) and easier to frame development issues into this broader right terminology.

New opportunities opened up for development organizations. Pettit and Wheeler (2005) mention how many development organizations were still confronted with the limitations of technical project approaches to tackle to root causes of poverty and were realizing the necessity to address the underlying dynamics of exclusion and inequality at legal, political, social, cultural and economic levels. They mention that the former responses to the limited effects of their projects such as participatory approaches, increasing accountability in policy making, advocacy and mobilization activities were missing the legal, political and social processes to make actors commit to basic development; the rights and obligations. Scoones (2009) furthermore mentions that the livelihood approach received critique for failing to take into account these political processes as main issues in development rather than as a contextual factor.

From the 1990s onward development organizations thus started to recognize the importance of integrating rights within development programs as one holistic process (Chapman, et al., 2004; Ljungman, 2004). Especially in the last fifteen years using a right terminology has been on the rise, integrating rights with development programs leading into the rights-based approaches. The development programs in line with this approach are embedded in the international framework of human rights (Molyneux and Lazar 2003; Uvin 2004; Tomas 2005 cited in Mitlin and Hickey, 2009), that has emerged simultaneously in a separate domain since the 1948, (Uvin 2004; Gready and Ensor 2005 both cited in Mitlin and Hickey, 2009), the moment of the articulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Ljungman, 2004). An important event that furthermore emphasized the importance of rights in development was the Vienna Conference on Human rights in 1993 held by the United Nations. The discourse linking rights with development has gradually been gaining more space in mainstream development ever since (Ljungman, 2004).

1.1.2 The premises of the right-based approach

There is quite some plurality in different right-based approaches as the meaning of the approach shows variation within policies and actions of different development organizations, agencies and governments due to different starting points with different implications (Ljungman, 2004; Pettit and Wheeler, 2005; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musenmbi, 2004; Mitlin and Patel , 2005; Cornwall and Molyneux, 2006). The essential principles or characteristics are shared though by most representations of rights-based development (Kindornay, et al, 2012; Mitlin and Patel, 2005). The principles that are basically embraced by all that pursue the rights-based approach to development are: accountability, participation, empowerment and non-discrimination or equality, (Kapur and Duvvury, 2006; Mukhopadhyay and Meer 2008; The Danish Institutes for Human Rights, 2007).

Piron (2005) indicates that the shift to rights-based development refers to *"a systematic transformation in the way in which the goal of development is conceptualized, objectives set and monitored, strategies are developed and the relationship with partners is managed"* (Piron 2004 cited in Piron 2005 pp. 22). As the name already indicates rights are central in the approach. A rights framework, with international norms, backed up with an international law, provides legitimacy for citizens to claim their rights and hold government institutions responsible for providing the opportunities to grant those rights (Ljungman, 2004; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, 2005). Development in this view is seen as a process of achieving basic human rights in economic, social, cultural, civil, and political dimensions (UNDP, 2000; Sen, 1999 both cited in Conway et al., 2002).

A separation is often made between a rights-based approach and approaches that focus on service delivery (Kindornay et al., 2012; Mitlin and Patel, 2005 Cornwall and Nyamu-Musenmbi, 2004; 2005). Service delivery, as is given in more conventional programs, is seen, by proponents of rights-based development, as treating the symptoms and not the causes of poverty (Miller, VeneKlasen and Clark, 2005; Kindornay et al., 2012). Kindornay et al., (2012) gives as reason for this that rights-based development is founded on the idea that rather than NGOs, governments are duty-bound under international human right law to provide services. This is also in line with the current aid structure in which accountability of recipient states is high on the agenda (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musenmbi, 2004; 2005). Put in a bit different way Cornwall and Nyamu-Musenmbi (2004) state a difference; service delivery is focused on securing additional resources and a rights-based approach focusses on a more equal division of the available resources and assisting the marginalized to claim their share. This Mitlin and Patel (2005) call the difference between "charitable goodwill to meet the basic needs" and the "recognition of the equal rights of all citizens to resources required for material well-being and social inclusion" (pp.6). There are rights-based perspectives more open to service delivery though only if used to empower citizens and to gain trust from them to build grassroots relations (Kindornay et al., 2012). The rights-based approach is, more than other approaches, focussed on the political processes in development strategies (Moser et al, 2003 cited in Mitlin and Patel, 2005; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musenmbi, 2004; 2005). Development efforts in the approach are thus potentially re-politicized (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musenmbi, 2005).

An important notion in the approach is the intention to transform the state-citizen relationship (Piron 2003 cited in Mitlin and Patel, 2005; Piron 2005; Luttrell and Quiroz, 2007) as there is the "association with claim-making on the state to secure resources" (Mitlin and Patel, 2005 pp. 10). According to a "Statement of Common Understanding", issued by the UN development program, *"human rights determine the relations between individuals and groups with valid claims (right-holders) and State and non-state actors with correlative obligations (duty-bearers). It works towards strengthening the capacities of right-holders to make their claims, and duty-bearers to meet their obligations"* (cited in Kapur and Duvvury, 2006 pp.7). Advocates of rights-based development claim the new paradigm will enhance accountability of development actors, both state as well as not state actors (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musenmbi, 2005; Kindornay et al., 2012). Ensuring rights thus requires institutions capable to respond to right claims, while at the same time citizens and social organizations should engage with these institutions in order to claim and promote rights (Pettit and Wheeler, 2005). Here the two sides of the right-based medal come forward; the citizens who claim their right (right-holders) and the responsibility to meet those rights by institutions (duty bearers) (Pettit and Wheeler, 2005).

Another key component of rights-based approaches is the view of people, as right-holders are seen as the centre of development processes, not as beneficiaries but as "active citizens with rights and entitlements" (Piron, 2005 pp.22). This is seen as enhancing participation and people centred development (Mitlin and Hickey, 2009; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musenmbi, 2005). Proponents of the approach see the potential to embrace rights and claims to enable the priorities and views of the poor to be translated into actual outcomes (Moser et al. 2001 cited in Mitlin and Patel, 2005). Rights-based approaches aim to shift the attention to inequality, exclusion and discrimination of vulnerable and marginalized groups for whom the barriers that prevent them from claiming their rights need to be addressed (Piron, 2005). Unequal power-relations are ideally altered in the development process (Miller, VeneKlasen and Clark, 2005; Kindornay, et al, 2012). This way the conditions are created for processes of change that are beneficial for the poorest and marginalized groups (Pettit and Wheeler, 2005)

Power-relations are thus at the centre of analysis in the approach; the importance of analysing unequal power relations and the identification of means that could alter these relationships is paramount (Chambers 2003; Hughes et al 2005). Hence the underlying interests behind the causes of exclusion must be known and altered if rights are to be realized. Pettit and Wheeler (2005) therefore state that to achieve more specific goals such as equal participation of women, land rights or other, in practice the underlying power dynamics and relations that have preserved this denial of rights in the first place need to be altered.

1.1.3 The rights-based approach its unanswered questions

While there are many positive voices about the approach there is also quite some criticism, questioning its real practical impacts (Pettit and Wheeler; VeneKlasen and Clark, 2005; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musenmbi, 2004; 2005; Tsikata, 2007; Kindornay, et al, 2012). Tsikata (2007) mentions that the critiques are often not related to the importance of human rights but rather to the correctness of the premise that adopting a rights-based approach will inevitably enhance accountability, participation and people-centred development while other efforts in this regard were often ineffective (Tsikata, 2007; Kindornay et al., 2012). While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss all the questions associated to the approach, here I will outline some of the concerns related to this research.

With the approach extending its territory (Kindornay, et al, 2012) critical questions still remain unanswered such as;' "what is really different as compared to other approaches and does this approach and advancing rights really bring the desirable changes for poor and marginalized people (Pettit and Wheeler pp.1; Miller, VeneKlasen and Clark, 2005 pp. 35; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musenmbi, 2004). Kindornay et al., (2012) for example question that after more than fifteen years the supporters of the rights-based approach still cannot prove its value because of little baseline data and the long-term nature of rights-based development which raises the costs of monitoring while simultaneously making it an impractical job (pp. 497). Miller, VeneKlasen and Clark (2005) mention that though development organizations are trying to understand how rights-based approaches can strengthen the impacts of their programs, it is proven to be difficult to take the findings of these efforts into practice.

Kindornay et al. (2012) mention a difficulty arising for development organizations is to transfer right based ideas on development from the head-quarters to the local staff working in the field. The main reasons for this, as they mention, is the still unfamiliarity with the approach within the organizations and the more theoretical than actual practical experience with rights-based development. In their research they found that staff often lacks the tools and skills for right based work. Translating the policy into practice is often found to be a major challenge (Kindornay et al., 2012). "Conceptual confusion" is mentioned as main reason for these the current difficulties. While most organizations use the same principles such as empowerment and participation the interpretations of these principles vary greatly (Kindornay et al., 2012; Miller, VeneKlasen and Clark, 2005; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musenmbi; 2005). For example there often is a lack in explanation about who is accountable towards whom, in which domain and how the "powerful" can be held to account (Goetz and Jenkings, 2002; Cornwall and Gaventa, 2000 cited in Eyben and Ferguson, 2004)

Another critique that questioned the potential of rights to promote development was based on the focus on legal matters. The rights-discourse originally emerged from legal studies focussed on legal reform that would lead to political changes and local change, this Grugel and Piper (2009) state implies a dependence on the law and gaining legal recognition when applying this right-discourse in development. Legal right claims pose some limitations as for example the right to education or the right to health care might be impossible for the state due to budget limitations (Mukhopadhyay and

Meer, 2008; Grugel and Piper, 2009). Some right-based approaches therefore tend to focus on political and civil rights with higher moral contents and less on social and economic rights (Tsikata, 2007; Grugel and Piper, 2009). While the international human right framework can thus provide legitimacy to claims and right-based work not all development practices can be easily framed successfully in the framework and consequently assist groups to realize those rights. Tsitaka (2007) therefore also questions there is often overtly focused on the nation state as main duty-bearer while most economic and social decisions are not made in this sphere.

1.1.4 Right-based development and gender

Gender issues have been part of development since the 1970s with different approaches to gender inequalities. The rights-based approach has been embraced by some, human right proponents of the women's movement (Tsikata, 2007). Women, in many parts of the world face exclusion and gender-based discrimination in different spheres of their lives and for that reason they would potentially benefit from an approach that focuses on the marginalized using principles as equality and non-discrimination (Cornwall and Molyneux, 2006; Tiskata, 2007; AWID 2002 cited in Tsikata, 2007). The increased priority given to women's rights by international NGOs such as ActionAid, Care and Oxfam is likewise a possible benefit of the right-based directions (Cornwall and Molyneux, 2006). Cornwall and Molyneux (2006) furthermore mention that, the UN agenda on rights provided opportunities for women's rights advocates and social movements to advance their feminist agenda.

Similar questions that apply to the right-based approach are also heard in the feminist corner. Furthermore some questions are raised that focus specifically on women as marginalized group within the approach. Critiques for example doubt that the emancipatory potential of the right discourse in development can be realized in practice (Mukhopadhyay and Meer, 2008). Questions posed by Nyamu-Musembi (2006) for example are; what kind of rights have been advanced and why and which and whose rights have been compromised in the process. These questions should be asked to analyse the meaning of "rights" in the mainstream development policies. In other words what has been the real meaning or implications of advancing women's rights (Mukhopadhyay and Meer, 2008) with this direction in international development discourses (Cornwall and Molyneux, 2006). A critique for example from the work of Mitlin and Patel (2005) is the reliability of the idea that the women development needs can be met by "more effective claim-making on the state" which in their study is found not to be based on the choices or experiences of the women.

Some activists find the focus on "women" instead of "gender" less generalizing and having potential of putting the focus on issues of power and women's rights (Cornwall and Molyneux, 2006). Win (2008) states right-holders have to be named in rights-based programs and therefore the focus is not on gender but on women as right-holders and as agents of change. This she states has made the shift possible from women seen as instrumental to broader development objectives to the notion of women as people in their own right, with needs and wants as individuals and with entitlements. This development is not only perceived as positive though. As Mukhopadhyay and Meer (2008) for

example mention that the vision of a woman as her own entity with rights rather than in relation to a man could potentially reproduce the exclusion based on gender differences. This actual implications should therefore be examined.

Another central question asked by Cornwall and Molyneux (2006) is whether rights intersect with the realities of women in situations where there is gender-inequality and poverty and there are multiple legal systems and cultural norms which prevent the realization of rights. Likewise Mukhopadhyay and Meer (2008) point the lack of understanding of the nature of women's subornation in rights-based approach. Finally the critique that there is a tendency to rely on legalistic approaches and on the relationship between the individuals and the state, as discussed in the previous section, is especially relevant for women's issues (Mukhopadhyay and Meer, 2008). The reason, Mukhopadhyay and Meer (2008) indicate this relevance is that women are in this regard put at a disadvantage because harms that happen in the private sphere could be ignored, as social and economic rights are beyond the state governed by familial, kinship and customary institutions.

1.2 Research rational

The rights-based approach is seen by many as a promising direction taken by development organizations. The approach is praised for its focus on tackling the causes instead of the symptoms as compared to previous approaches and for its potential to re-politicize the development process. The proponents of the approach furthermore believe a rights-based approach could enhance participation, empowerment, accountability and people centred development efforts. From several directions critical voices are heard though about the correctness of these premises as many critical questions remain unanswered until this day. It is commonly heard that its actual value in development programs still needs to be proven. A central concern is the difficulty to transfer the ideas to the local staff working on the ground and the difficulty to put the ideas into practices. For this reason the practical relevance and the actual implication of the approach in development programs should be examined in more detail.

At the same time a local NGO, implementing a right-based program in the Ankober Woreda in Ethiopia had questions about the establishment of women CBOs for the purpose of rights-based development. The need for more knowledge was expressed on the underlying dynamics that caused dissimilar and sometimes "undesirable" outcomes. After the first assessment of the program a lack of awareness was identified about the impact of the rights-based approach as starting point in the establishment processes of the CBOs.

Both the theoretical as well as the practical situation show a need to understand the implications of the rights-based approach in the practices of development programs. The understanding of the translations and negotiations of the approach into actual practices and the consequences in the daily experiences and the interactions of the people involved in the program will tell us more about the implications of the approach in the program and in the lives of the so-called marginalized, the women. An ethnographic case study such as is presented here gives space to analyse in-depth the

establishment processes of the CBOs, the relationships between the different actors and the interplay between especially the NGO, the government and the CBOs as well as between the international guidance of the approach and the local practical situation in Ankober.

This thesis will thereby contribute to both theory and practice in knowledge on the implications of the rights-based approach in the areas of accountability and empowerment and the creation of links between the state and its citizens. The CBOs in this program are focussed on women as the marginalized, and therefore the concerns of feminist advocates about the implications of right-based programs in advancing women rights or more gender equality are central in the analysis. Concerns from the theory (both general and from the feminist corner) will be put in a more practical perspective thereby opening space to think about possible solutions for the operational challenges that were also outlined in this introduction.

1.3 Objective and Research question of the study in Ankober

The main objective of this study is to analyse the implications of working with the rights-based approach in the establishment processes of CBOs to advance gender-equality in Ankober in order to give recommendations on how to move beyond operational challenges when translating the approach into practices

Main question
What are the implications of working with the right-based approach in the establishment processes of CBOs to advance gender-equality in Ankober?

Sub-questions
- What are the main ideas behind the establishment of the women CBOs in the Ankober development program and how are the ideas of the rights-based approach represented in the program policies?
- How are the right-based policies translated and interpreted by the actors involved in the program in the field and how do they enact upon these policies?
- What are the consequences of the program policies in the daily experiences and interactions of the people involved (especially the so-called marginalized women)?

1.4 Main concepts: the principles of the rights-based approach

This study was guided by the main principles of the rights-based approach. As stated the interpretations of the concepts vary greatly among different development practioners. Here the concepts will be discussed shortly. Throughout the report the interpretations, translations and performances of the practioners in this case-study will come forward.

1.4.1 Rights

While the contemporary discourse on Human Rights derives the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared in 1949, there is not a clear consensus on the human rights framework (Ljungman, 2004). Likewise some authors mention that while a common understanding is that the rights-based approach is embedded in the International Human Right Framework, the concept of rights differs and often extends beyond human rights, as they include a full range of indivisible, interdependent and interrelated economic, social, cultural and political rights which includes the right to participate or for example the right to peace or a healthy environment (see IDS, 2003 cited in Mitlin and Pater, 2005; Mukhopadhyay and Meer, 2008).

Moser (2004) definition of rights is useful for rights-based programs; *"rights are widely characterized as legitimate claims that give rise to correlative obligations or duties. To have a right is to have a legitimate claim against some person, group, or organization such as a social or economic institution, a state or an international community. The latter, in turn, has an obligation or a duty to assist right holder in securing the right" (pp30)*

Instead of the reliance on an internationally defined set of human rights, Moser states the definition, interpretation and implementation of rights are inherently political and dynamic processes that concern power-relations. In their conclusion Grugel and Piper (2009) also mention "we need to recognize that rights are being claimed in highly politicized context in which outcomes depend more on power relations than on the law".

A side-note has to be made for this study, as rights in-itself are not defined in the program in Ankober. The program started in 2005 with a rights-based approach including the right-terminology. After 2009 a law which prevents NGOs from using this right-terminology was implemented in Ethiopia[2]. The basic ideas behind rights-based approach remained intact though.[3] The word entitlement is not (yet) forbidden and therefore the definition of Moser is still suitable related to this right-based program. The central ideas of the rights-based approach that are discussed in this introduction are still the main policy directions in the program.

1.4.2 Accountability

The implication of citizens with rights, as legitimate claims is thus that it gives rise to corresponding legal or moral obligations of duty-bearers (governments, NGOs) who have a responsibility to these right-holders (Mukhopadhyay and Meer, 2008; Eyben and Ferguson, 2004; Moser 2004). The rights-based approach puts special attention on accountability towards the poorest people (Eyben and Ferguson, 2004). Most rights-based approaches share that non-state actors are seen as having responsibilities, yet in ensuring rights the state is usually seen as main duty-bearer.

Eyben and Ferguson (2004) mention that from a right-perspective accountability means that the (marginalized) citizens are involved in defining and monitoring the responsibilities of the state, they

---

[2] This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3
[3] Interview with a representative from the donor agency

therefore say accountability is closely related to responsiveness and transparency. *"Responsiveness is about the capacity of the state to respond to citizen's legitimate and moral claims and to provide their statutory in a transparent and accountable manner"* (pp.166).

1.4.3 Participation

In most rights-based approaches participation is on the one hand seen as a right in itself (Ljungman, 2004; Mukhopadhyay and Meer, 2008) meaning: *"every person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy civil, economic, social and political development … all people are entitled to participate in society to the maximum of their potential"* (Ljungman, 2004; pp.11). On the other hand participation is also seen as a mean of ensuring accountability (Mukhopadhyay and Meer, 2008). This means the programs based rights-based approaches often work with strategies that ensure the "voice" of the marginalized groups, opportunities for participation and mechanisms that ensure these voices lead to increased accountability (Mukhopadhyay and Meer, 2008)

1.4.4 Empowerment

The rights-based approach focuses the empowerment of the "right-holder", and while there are many similarities with other empowerment approaches, as will become clear in chapter 5 and 6, there are some differences. Mukhopadhyay and Meer (2008) state that organizations working with ta rights-based approach explicitly focus on empowering people rather than treating them as beneficiaries. By doing this they say empowerment is taken a step further as it puts the spotlight on altering the power-relations through making claims, having rights realized, influence decision-making and holding institutions accountable. This emphasis on the obligations of the duty-bearers in the approach is a central difference between a rights-based approach and other development approaches (Luttrell and Quiroz, 2007).

1.4.5 Non-discrimination and Equality

The principle of non-discrimination and equality in its essence entails that each person in society has equal opportunities and access to resources to fulfil their basic needs (Ljungman, 2004). Most right-based approaches focus on this principle with attention to the rights of vulnerable or marginalized groups, for example minorities, indigenous people or women that lack these opportunities or this access to resources (Ljungman, 2004; Mukhopadhyay and Meer, 2008).

1.5 Overview of the thesis

Chapter 1   **Introducing the right-based direction in development programs**

Chapter 2   **Methodology and theoretical approach**

This chapter will give an outline of the methodology of this thesis. In this chapter also short introductions can be found to the area and the four different CBOs.

Chapter 3   **Introducing the setting: the development program in Ankober**

This chapter gives an overview of the program in Ankober and its context. Furthermore the main ideas behind the establishments of the women CBOs in the program and how the ideas of the rights-based approach, such as marginalization, empowerment and accountability are represented in the program policies. Also the ideas on state-citizen relationship come forward.

Chapter 4   **The interplay between the NGO, the government offices and the CBOS: the state-citizen relationship and accountability**

This chapter discusses how the program policies are translated and interpreted by the different actors involved. Furthermore it looks into how the actors enact upon these translations and interpretations.

Chapter 5   **Empowerment pathways: daily life experiences of the so-called marginalized women as individuals and group**

This chapter introduces the empowerment efforts in the program and how this enhanced the women in gaining control over their lives. Furthermore the chapter looks into the "successfulness" of becoming independent organizations.

Chapter 6   **Consequences of right-based development in this program: the current position of the right-holders and their relationship with the duty-bearers**

This chapter goes more in-depth on the political nature of the rights-based approach. Ideas on right-holders and duty bearers and state-citizen relationships are discussed in relation to the established CBOs. This will go more into the current situation and the broader consequences of the right-based policies had on this situation and will shed some light on how the continuation of the CBOs could be envisioned.

Chapter 7   **Conclusion: implications of working with a rights-based approach in the establishment processes of women CBOs in the Ankober Woreda**

Chapter 8   **Discussion: moving beyond operational challenges when translating a rights-based approach into practices.**

Chapter 2

Methodology and Theoretical Approach

In this chapter I will describe the methodology for the research. The disposition of this study is qualitative research which can be, although not completely, separated from quantitative research in its aim or objective. The aim of this study is not related to explaining a causal relationship rather it has a more qualitative nature and is aiming at explaining the implications of the right-based approach in practices. This I believe cannot be comprehended through causal relationships alone or by quantitative research. The qualitative research design is directed by the theoretical starting point that a reflexive approach is needed. This in essence means that the research itself is subjected to the same critical analysis as the topic under study (Green and Thorogood, 2004). Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state that "this approach acknowledges that the orientations of the researcher will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including their values and their interests" (pp.15). After explaining the choices made in research design, I will introduce the research location as well as the informants that are the foundation of this study. Furthermore I will discuss the methods used, the choices made in the field, the limitations faced and I will reflect upon the research and my role and orientations in the research process.

2.1 Research Design

The type of research design that is chosen for this research is an ethnographic case study. A case study is a comprehensive study including research on one or a few cases in an extensive way. The exact meaning of what a case study entails can differ among different researchers. It can be related to the aim of the research which is the case with this study. Green and Thorogood (2004) mention that this design is appropriate when the aim of studying a naturally occurring phenomena is a starting point for a case study or the need for in-depth knowledge; "A case study involves studying a phenomenon within its context" (Green and Thorogood, 2004 pp.46). This case-study encompasses four CBOs that each shows a different situation. This gave room to analyse how different translations and interpretations of NGO officers implementing the same program policies led to quite different situations. Furthermore in order to gain insights in the relationships between the actors (important element in the rights-based approach) this type of design is appropriate since it gives more room to explore these relationships within the establishment process. To analyse all the dynamics of support, and the ideas of empowerment and accountability in the program, the CBOs needed to be seen in its whole context. Furthermore a case study provides the time to build trust among the informants to discuss sensitive topics such as unequal gender relationships.

The design of this study was open for change. The research questions were changed during the process. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) talk about a pre-field work phase or beginning of the research in which the aim should be to turn the "foreshadowed problems" into a set of questions. They

also discuss how change in research problems can occur because of diverse causes. For example if the former question was based on wrong assumptions. This occurred during this research as well and questions were adapted after a pre-research phase at the head office of the local organization. The research strategy might therefore be called flexible. The stages of literature review, research design, data collection, analysis and writing up informed each other and overlapped. Furthermore the data from the different sources was used in multiple directions. The different methods provided information to answer the research questions while at the same time the research questions were adapted to the results gained in the field.

The study design gave me the possibility of an in-depth analysis of social changes and relations within and around the CBOs establishment. It gave time with the actors involved, to expose the ideas, relations, interest's expectations and perceptions of them. It gave me a chance to encompass an as comprehensive picture of reality as was possible within the time-frame. This fitted this study well as it gave insights in the dynamics that influenced the establishments as well as how the CBOs are operating in their environments, and in the end it made explicit the implicit right-based direction of the program. The study can be called ethnographic as in line with the interpretation of Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) it is based on first hand empirical investigation as well as the comparative interpretation of social organization. This study therefore also entailed various research methods. Triangulation of the research results coming from several data collection methods and sources gave me the opportunity to cross-check results and put the empirical results in its theoretical context.

2.2 Introduction to the research location
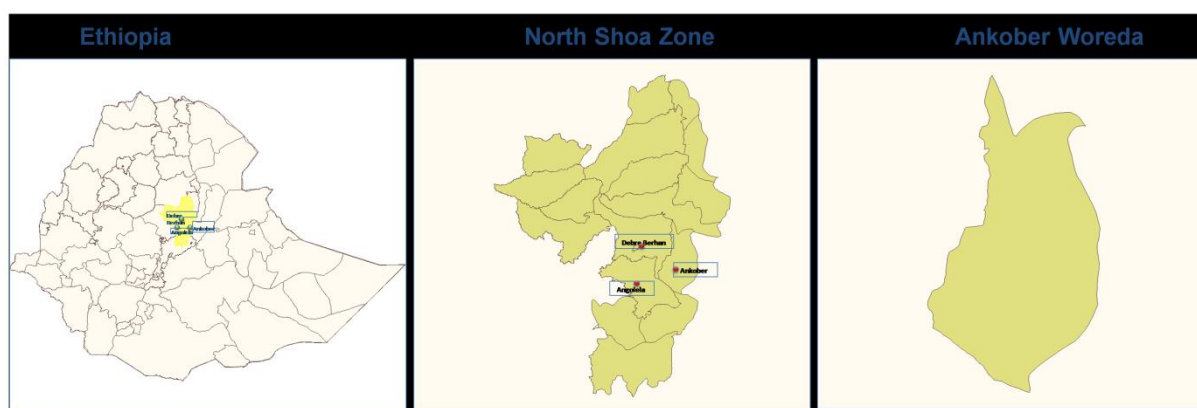
Figure 1: The location of the Ankober Woreda Source: http://www.plosone.org

In June 2013 I moved from Addis to the Ankober Woreda to conduct my fieldwork and collect my data. A major motivation to choose this Woreda was that the NGO was "implementing" a program following the right-based approach and they had concerns about the progress made by the CBOs established in the program. Furthermore I gained access to the CBOs that were established and to the government

offices in this specific Woreda through the NGO. Because in-depth qualitative nature of this research I decided to focus on CBOs located in the same Woreda, established by the same NGO with the same policies. The CBOs in this research are located in the two towns Gorebela, Alliyu Amba, and the more rural Gorgo and Debedebo Kebeles.

Gorebela, the capital of the Woreda, can be reached in one hour drive from Debre Birhan, a larger city in the Amhara region. There is one main dirt road in the town arriving from Debre Birhan and continuing to Alliyu Amba. The town is built around this road. The Woreda government offices and the field-office of the local NGO are located in this town, at the main road, as is a bank and some small shops. In the middle there is an open space where at Tuesday and Saturday people from the town and the neighbouring villages come together to sell and buy food and other items on a market. Many immigrants that come from the more rural areas are living in the town. A NGO officer told me that most immigrants came to the town during the famine in 1983 but nowadays people also migrate from the rural areas to this town looking for a job. There is no land for the migrants and most are dependent on casual work which is often only available for some days per month.

The Alliyu Amba Kebele can be reached from Gorebela in one hour by car following a dirt road. Most people in the village are farmers, but land sizes vary and there are landless people or almost landless people living in the town as well. There is a central market place, surrounded by a few small shops. Every Friday there is a market.

Gorgo is located at a three hour drive from Gorebela and a 2 hour drive from Alliyu Amba in the dry-season. In the raining season the road is washed away and travelling to the town becomes more dangerous or even impossible by car. Gorgo has a main street with a few small shops and Kebele government buildings. Around this the people live who often depend on farming for living.

Debedebo can be reached in 2 hours (on foot because the road is not suitable for a vehicle) from Gorebela. Unlike the other 3 Kebeles, this Kebele does not have electricity, a health centre or a school for children after grade 4. The people in the Kebele live very shattered. In the middle of the Kebele there is a small government building. There is not a market in the village. People from Debedebo make use of the markets in Gorebela and in Alliyu Amba. Most people in the Kebele run their livelihoods around farming activities.

All four Kebeles are located in highland areas. I stayed in Gorebela during the nights and during day-time I visited three other villages; Alliyu Amba, Debedebo and Gorgo. I have spent most time with the members of the CBOs in Gorebela and Alliyu Amba, and in the other two villages I have visited approximately 5 days each. The main reason for this was the accessibility to the villages. There is not any possibility to reach Debedebo by car and the road to Gorgo was not completely safe for travelling after heavy rain. Furthermore I was dependent on my translator and the transport with the NGO officials which made Alliyu Amba and Gorebela the most accessible for both interviews as well as extended observation. I did choose to spend 5 days in both Debedebo and Gorgo for two different reasons. The first was that in Debedebo an inherently different CBO was established, that was considered as "stronger"[4] which made it interesting to compare it to the CBOs in Gorebela and Alliyu

---

[4] Interviews with a representative from the head-office of the local NGO in Addis Ababa

Amba. Secondly in Gorgo a CBO has been established which according to the NGO was very weak, and after discussion with the NGO official an opportunity opened up to visit Gorgo for a few days. These choices gave me an interesting mix of established CBOs with many similarities but also some crucial differences in the translations of donor policies, as well as how all people involved acted in the establishment of the CBOs.

2.3 Introduction to the CBOs

2.3.1 Eskedar Restock CBO

In the Gorebela Kebele, the capital of the Woreda the first official CBO, Eskedar Restock, was established 4 years ago, in 2007. There were not organizations similar to Eskedar present in the area before the NGO came to the Woreda. The idea for a woman CBO came from the local NGO. The idea of establishing CBOs was an unfamiliar area for the government offices in the Woreda. The first and foremost motivation of the local NGO, to establish, especially, this CBO was to set an example for women empowerment in the area. The intention was *"to show the Woreda offices that women CBOs should be established and should be supported.[5]"* The establishment of this CBO would then be an example to establish more women CBOs in the other Kebeles in the Woreda. The CBO was established as income generation CBO. The purpose of the group, the empowerment of the women is described by the program officer as: *"to make them owner of their association, to have the capacity to make decisions, to create a source of income and to enhance their livelihoods[6]".* At the moment the CBO has 32 members; all involved in sheep-rearing or fattening and other income generation activities made possible by a revolving loan from the CBO. At the same time their activities in sheep rearing should improve the life-stock in the area. The main changes in the CBO since its establishment are the

Figure 2: A member of the Eskedar Restock CBO with her sheep

election of a new leader, a changed payback time for the loans, and the increased number of members. The members all complained about the payback time during my stay in the Woreda and claimed it was decreasing their benefits. During their meetings of the CBO there were several new ideas discussed to generate more income, most of these ideas were not yet implemented. The members are saving currently 20 birr each month. The savings have never been used and are in their shared bank-account.

---

[5] Interview with a program officer in the head office of the local NGO
[6] Idem

2.3.2 Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm

Figure 3: The Alliyu Amba poultry farm

In the Kebele Alliyu Amba, three years ago, in 2008, a woman CBO, that owns a poultry farm, was established by the local NGO, several government offices, the women association and the new members of the CBO. The CBO is an income generation organizations following the example of the Eskedar Restock CBO in Gorebela. The objective of this specific CBO, as found in the documents of the NGO was; *to enhance the income of 30 women and improve their family lives.* Furthermore the empowerment of the women is set as an outcome of the project and finally the CBO should be an example in the area to empower also other women in the Kebele. The idea is that the women will be empowered economically and that they will increase decision-making power on resource control and managing the project process. An additional purpose of the CBO was that the surrounding communities would benefit from the distribution of the improved chicken variety the beginning the CBO faced difficulties to generate income in the CBO and there are technical problems that are not yet overcome and the women do not believe the CBO has been beneficial to them until now. To keep the members in the CBO the NGO has provided a loan to the members of the CBOs. With the loan the women work individually on some small enterprise ideas. The CBO has 32 members and is not adding new members at the moment. The women are saving 30 birr each month. The savings have not been used and are collected in their shared bank account.

2.3.3 Gorgo Shower Accommodation

In the Gorgo Kebele an income generation CBO was established that owns a shower accommodation. The members of the CBO offer the shower for a small fee for people living in the town or travelling through the town. There are 13 members. There were more members but several have left the CBO; most because they did not see benefits from the CBO. The shower service is not providing the women with much income. The shower had been broken for quite some time due to a minor technical issue that was only resolved

Figure 4: A few of the members of the Shower Accommodation CBO in Gorgo

after 8 months. The CBO is not adding new members. The women are not saving money in the CBO, though women are saving in local saving associations. The women were given a loan by the NGO which they use for small-scale enterprise activities.

2.3.4 Debedebo Women Watch Group

In the Kebele Debedebo a Woman Watch Group (WWG) CBO has been established by the NGO in cooperation with the Justice Office and the Woman Affairs Office at Woreda and Kebele level. The CBO was established 4 years ago as an inherently different CBO than the other CBOs in this research, which focused on income generation and restock activities. This CBO started in 2007 with as purpose to challenging harmful traditional practices (HTP) against girls and women throughout their Kebele. This was the main intention to start the CBO, with the idea that the people from within the Kebele should prevent the HTP in the future. At this moment the group has 64 members, and has therefore become the largest CBO in the Woreda and is still adding members.

Figure 5: A police officer explaining the law to women of the WWG in Debedebo

Additionally the CBO cooperates with influential leaders in the Kebele such as religious and Iddir leaders[7]. The women are saving 3 birr each 15 days and their savings are used to provide each other with a loan in time of need. Their main activities are watching their neighbours and visits houses of other women to prevent HTP and this is their main topic of discussion during their meetings. The women have been quite successful in reducing female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage and abduction.

2.4 Research informants

The study was carried out in cooperation with the staff of the field-office of the NGO. This gave me access to the informants for the research. To be able to get an as complete picture as possible, all involved actors were potential informants, with the members of the CBOs as central persons.

In all the Kebeles the introduction to the CBOs was initiated by the program officers, who were at the same time facilitating the research as well as being informants themselves. The members of the CBOs were often very eager to talk to me, and with the use of a snowball technique members were found to have interviews or informal talks with. The leader and financer of each group became close contacts and assisted with arranging interviews with as varied as possible members of the groups. This gave besides the common aspects a variety of different stories from different women. In some cases I visited the houses of the women and in other cases I attended a meeting of the CBO and talked with some members after their meeting. My translator came with me on walks through the village while we were "chatting" to the members we met and a few neighbours. The neighbours were not easy to approach, some wanted to share something while others did not want to talk to me. Trust played a

---

[7] Chapter 3 will provide more information on Iddir

major role during the research; I was an outsider in many aspects. For this reason I spent as much time with the CBO members as possible. This made it possible to go more in-depth on several sensitive topics such as poverty, challenges, relations with others and exclusion etc. In total I have spoken to 12 members from Eskedar Restock CBO, including the leader and the financer. Several I have spoken to more than one time. The same is the case for the Alliyu Amba CBO. Furthermore I had 2 group-discussions with both groups and 8 home visits in both Kebeles. In Gorgo I held interviews with 8 members and one group discussion. In Debedebo I had one group discussion, interviews with 12 members and I had one discussion with almost all members of the CBO, which are 64 members.

Other main informants were the involved government officers (3 from the Woreda, and 1 from each Kebele), a police man, 3 Kebele leaders, 2 field officers and 1 coordinator of the NGO. Furthermore during reflection afternoons I had the chance to observe and listen to Iddir and religious leaders. Finally, in Addis Ababa I had extensively spoken to the head-office staff of the NGO, the director, 2 former program officers/coordinators from the Ankober program. Two times I had the chance to speak with a representative of the donor agency; one time before my departure to the area and one time after I came back to Addis Ababa.

2.5 Research process and methods

The data was collected in a period of 6 months from February 2012 until August 2012. From June until mid-August this happened in the field; the Ankober Woreda, while before that date the research took place in the head-office of the organization in Addis Ababa. The study involved participating in the daily activities of the NGO for an extended period of time, and in daily (work) life of the NGO officers and the CBO members in 4 Kebeles. The data was collected, using different data collection methods. This has been done in order to compare the results from each method. The methods that were used are: literature and document review, participant observation, ethnographic conversations, in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. The research process will be described here, going through the different methods that have been used. Because the research methods were both used in the period I stayed in the head office and the period I stayed in the Ankober Woreda the process described will go back and forth.

2.5.1 Literature and document review

The study, like many other studies started with a literature review. The study relies on existing literature and documents to provide information on the background and the historical context of the study as well as on the theoretical direction. The available data is analysed and provided the theoretical background to answer research questions. Findings from preceding studies are therefore taken into account as information sources. Existing literature furthermore was used to formulate the initial research questions and guided changes during the research process.

Arriving at the head-office reviewing the documentation (as well as speaking directly with the employees of the NGO, see below) became possible. These documentations provided a much more

detailed idea about the establishment of CBOs by the NGO. It came forward that the program in Ankober followed a rights-based approach to development while rights were such a no-go topic within the development sector in Ethiopia. Therefore literature study was done on the rights-based approach to development, of which the main relevant results for this thesis can be found in the introduction in this thesis. The research questions were adapted and the objective changed as this brought new light to the establishment of the CBOs. Around this time the practicalities and limitations of the research became known and the research design was formed into more detail. At the head-office I furthermore had the chance to read the existent documents available in the organization related to the establishment of the CBOs in Ankober such as project policies and evaluations, annual reports. These were an important source of information. Data from these documents provided information on the context of the CBOs as well as information about the interpretations, formulations and translations of the directions from the donor by the local NGO.

2.5.2 Observational methods and informal interviews

A main research method during the research was participant observation. Within the organization it was a great benefit to have worked with the staff for an extended time during an internship. I was able to observe their behaviour as an actor in development to a great detail. Many questions were answered by working with the staff on activities such as proposal writing, donor visits, visits in field offices, a yearly capacity assessment of a donor etc. It revealed how the staff behaved rather than their accounts on their activities. Informal conversations were used to verify what is seen and to clarify observations that were unclear or not understood.

In the original design of this research participant observation was set as ideal strategy for the field study in the Ankober Woreda as well. However this turned out to be rather complicated. For many I was a clear outsider and most importantly I was seen as a guest. However it was possible to join in activities of the women such as meetings and to just be in the Kebeles, visiting homes and for example the poultry farm. Here it was possible to observe the group dynamics and their activities. Also during the home-visits and walks through the town the talks were very informal and I could see many things out of their daily life. Over time it also meant that, although people kept seeing me as an outsider and a guest they got used to my presence in the village. People stopped staring or laughing at me and started to go on with their normal routines. People started to open up to me as the time passed by. This meant that I was building rapport. Also I could ask questions during later conversations about observed behaviour. It was beneficial to be able to join the staff of the NGO at several times to see their daily activities in the field and ask them informally about their work and what they were doing and why. It helped move beyond some initial challenges with the staff to discuss topics beyond common "donor talk" (see challenges in this chapter).

Both observations in the offices as well as in the villages revealed much about the contextual factors that played an important role in the establishment of the CBOs. It gave openings to ask questions about observed behaviours and showed some disconnections between accounts and behaviours

which could be reflected on. An example is the account of women, government officials and NGO officers who told me the women in the poultry farm did everything by themselves while I noticed when I stayed at the farm 2 boys (sons of the financer of the CBO) were actually taking care of the farm. The observations gave me the opportunity to ask questions about this, while if I would have taken only their accounts, this information would have been lost.

2.5.3 Semi-structured interviews with key informants

During my stay in the head-office a topic list was created to take with me into the field. This topic list was created after holding semi-structured interviews, based on the documents and observation in the office, with 2 key informants in the head-office of the NGO as well as 1 key informant of the donor. They were selected based their assumed knowledge on program. The interviews were used to explore the topics and find the most relevant issues for the study in the study-area. Furthermore it gave me an insight in the boundaries studying the rights-based approach as the use of right-terminology was best avoided in the legal context. The focus on the establishment processes of the CBOs and the changes in the lives of the women was determined after these interviews. Indirectly this provided the information on how the right-based approach was operational without using the right-terminology. Based on these interviews the CBOs were selected, as was motivated previously in this chapter and the first accounts on the establishment (from former field officers) were gained in the process. The information gained through the documentations were explained and elaborated on by the officers and a coordinator from the donor organization.

This was repeated in the first 2 weeks in the field. Key informants were 2 NGO officers and the coordinator of the field-office, 2 government officials of the Woreda, 4 CBO leaders and from each CBO a semi-structured group-interview took place with around 6 members. This was done to enhance (together with observation) the topic lists for further in-depth interviews. It provided for example information about the first steps of the establishment of the CBOs, the selection procedure, ideas on the purpose of the CBO, the roles and relationships of the actors involved, the major events that took place in relation to the CBOs, ideas and expectations empowerment, participation, ownership, leadership, accountability and responsibilities. The differences between the CBOs became well known and new questions specific to each CBO were added to the topic lists as they were brought up by the members. A few examples are technical difficulties of the Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm, the pay-back difficulties of the Eskedar Restock CBO, the focus on a Shower Accommodation hat seemed to lack benefits for the members of the CBO in Gorgo, and the relatively high amount of members in the WWG in Debedebo that seemed to function much more effectively/sustainable at first sight.

5.2.4 Interviews - In-depth interviews

After the "pre-research" was done the information gained was analysed to guide further research. Questions were adapted and key-topics in the establishment processes of the CBOs as well as their current situation were identified for further research. In-depth interviews were held with 1 employee of the donor, 2 of the NGO, 4 government officials, 2 Kebele leaders and 44 members of the CBOs including their leaders and financers. The interviews led to greater understanding on the key issues that came up during the research process. Not one interview was the same though. The first reason for the differences in the interviews was that the women responded quite different to the requests for an interview. For example there were times we could not find the women because they had another responsibility at the time we were supposed to meet. In other cases the women asked if we could only spend a short time on the interview. However there were also situations in which members came with many at the same time all willing or wanting to have an interview while I was supposed to meet only one. These differences did provide information about the women and their relationship with the CBOs or their responsibilities in their household or in the Kebele.

During the interviews I also gave the informants time to elaborate on issues outside the topic list but I kept in mind to at least discuss the key issues before the interview would be over. The topics discussed were a mix between topics related to the rights-based approach, topics that were specific to the CBOs or to the women involved in the CBOs and topics that came up during the interviews. In 8 interviews the attempt was made to make a life history of the members. This proved to be quite difficult as the members were not used to this and wanted to talk about their CBOs and their current situation. Nevertheless a few interesting thoughts came out of these interviews. For example the high divorce rate for one person and the most successful CBO member of the Eskedar Restock CBO shared she had lived in Addis Ababa for a short period in her life and learned to work in a business there.

The in-depth interviews provided me with extensive information about the establishment process and current operations of the CBOs and at the same time I gained much data about the changes that had occurred in the lives of the women involved in the CBO and in the government offices.

5.2.5 Focus group discussion

Besides the semi-structured group-interviews held with a selection of the members during the pre-research phase, focus groups discussions at end of the research were held with each CBO. The discussion was used to cross-check information that was gained through observation, informal talks, semi-structured interviews and in-depth interviews. The discussions were very helpful to discuss the issues that came up in more detail.

Figure 6: Focus group discussion in Debedebo

Furthermore the interactions between the members of the CBOs and with other actors involved could be discussed and were in most cases confirming the relationships as well as issues of leadership observed and discussed earlier in the research. In a few cases some issues within the group came more to the surface during the final group discussions. For example during the final discussion with the members of the Eskedar Restock CBO the women expressed they realized that some problems were not discussed among each other and that there was unawareness of the problem at the management level, this led to a lively discussion among the members. The final group-discussion confirmed much of the information gained before and this made me confident about the results gained during this research.

5.2.6 Data management

All formal interviews, both semi-structured as well as in-depth interviews, were recorded and transcribed. All informants agreed with this recording. The recordings were deleted at the moment the data was transcribed. This recording gave me much more freedom to concentrate on asking the right questions, going into-depth when needed and to take into account body language. Furthermore I was working with a translator all the time which made recording extra convenient. It gave the possibility to crosscheck the translations with another translator.

There were also moments in which it was not convenient to use a recorder. This was the case for all moments of informal interaction. Using a recorder would have changed the interaction and this was not desirable. During the informal interactions some people were sometimes more open about some more sensitive topics such as violence against women and more details were mentioned in some cases. Also officers of the NGO seemed more willing to discuss topics such as rights, donor demands, and difficulties in their work in more detail during informal talks. As soon as I had the chance, usually not more than half a day, I wrote down the information obtained. In a few cases I had my note-book with me and I wrote down my notes at the same time.

2.6 Ethical concerns

My view on ethics is in line with the line of thinking that: "ethical values cannot be absolute; the practice of ethics is relevant and dependent on the moral professionalism of the researcher" (Green and Thorogood, 2004 pp. 64). However I also agree with David Silverman (1985) that it is more practicable for a researcher to ask what this research can contribute and to who (cited in Green and

Thorogood, 2004). The main intention of the research for me was the contribution to science in general and to show my analytical skills. However the NGO and the CBO members had different motivations to participate in the research and hoped the research would contribute to the solution to issues or problems the CBOs might face. This was challenging for me. They gave me their time and information but I could not give them much in return. Hopefully with this thesis I can contribute to the "successfulness" of the CBOs and their members by providing them insights on their current challenges.

My ethical concerns towards the participants of this study are the primary responsibility and are closely related to the two key principles of informed consent and confidentiality. Respondents at times had strong feelings on some of the topics and therefore I included some of their main points of interest. Although I also made sure I asked all questions that I saw as most relevant, some issues were looked into because the participants indicated its importance. During interview the participants were therefore given time to elaborate on the issues they found important. The location for the interview was set by the participants in the places of their convenience. By giving them some control the power-relation between me, the white female researcher from another world and the participants was a bit, although not completely equalized. I say a bit because in my eyes I would not be considered as the same, as I would always be seen as an outsider, coming from a different, in their words "developed" world.

In case of the observation it was impossible to get informed consent with all the actors observed. Therefore all are in the results unrecognizable and unidentifiable.

Furthermore, even though this research is not aiming at discussing human rights in the Woreda, the rights-based approach (even without the right-terminology) was the foundation for the program. The aspects of the approach that are still allowed in the program are the only aspects discussed in this thesis. Yet, because there might be some sensitivity related to concepts such as empowerment and accountability all quotes or information from interviews used in the text of respondents are anonymous. Only people who specifically gave their permission to use their names are mentioned by name.

2.7 Reflections on the research

In my opinion a good case study design can only be made after an in-depth review what can influence the research. The research process was influenced by several factors; a major one was that I had little prior experience in research. A second significant factor that influenced the research was that I was an outsider on almost every aspect. Also my intentions, interest and research style had an impact on the study. Furthermore the research context brought some challenges to study the research topic and the choices made for the study design influenced the outcome of this research. While this is not necessarily negative, it does influence and limits the research outcome and it is important to mention these issues.

2.7.1 Limitations

The advantages of a case study have been outlined above. Some limitations need to be considered as well. A case is embedded in a certain setting which shapes the way how the research questions can be formulated. The setting of the research is chosen by the given opportunity of the NGO. This setting was appropriate for the aim of the research. As stated by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) it needs to be taken into account that the setting is not naturally occurring but it is constructed by social action. It furthermore is not possible to give an exhaustive account of any locale, settings can contain several cases and a case may not be contained within the boundaries of a setting (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Sampling within the case also needs to be taken into account since different information might be retrieved in the day or night, week or weekend, summer or winter or raining or dry season. Also people might behave differently in different context and the context itself might vary across people and time. Furthermore a limitation of a case study design can be that the findings are not representing a broader group than the case selected. While this is a clear limitation of the research, the findings cross-related to the literature do provide interesting information about how the rights-based approach is embedded in this local context and the results are still valuable for other programs following the approach.

There were also some practical challenges starting with issues of transportation. For example to visit Gorgo I was dependent on the transport of the NGO which made it practically not possible to visit Gorgo more than a few days. Based on the transportation the accessibility of the Kebeles that could be included in the research had to be determined. This limits the research as there was less time to spent in some Kebeles (Gorgo), more time could have add some valuable information. Also it was impossible to do research to some CBOs as it would not have been feasible within the timeframe since travelling to Kebeles and to different houses in the Kebele would be impossible. This limitation gave also an important insight during the research, because it limited not only my study but it limited the work of the NGO in general. Various Kebeles beyond for example Debedebo (no possibility for a car) are not in the program because of accessibility problems while at the same time "the most marginalized" people might live in these Kebeles. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

The limitation that for me was the biggest challenge was the unfamiliarity of the local language. While I was able to speak a bit Amharic, learning the language was very difficult. There are no similarities with any other language I speak, and the time was too short to speak the language better. In the field office, luckily most officers could speak an average level of English and if something was not clear we could talk about it a bit more. In the government offices the level of English turned out to be low and other informants solely spoke Amharic. This meant for nearly all interviews, short conversations, listening to meetings I needed a translator. It became more difficult just to chat with people around the Kebeles. The translator's level of English was not always high enough to understand my questions and ask the same thing in Amharic, or translate the exact comments of the women to me. This meant some translations were his interpretations or his English words instead of the exact words of the

informants. This way some information might have got lost, or was changed by the interference of the translator. A second disadvantage of working with the translator was that the research was not well understood, and often the assumption was made that I needed to review the program and get outcomes only. During a few situations the translator continued to ask the informants more questions telling me the informant did not understand the question, while later I found out the informant did not understand his interpretation of the question, thinking about the answer I wanted to hear and the informant actually shared valuable information. After several explanations from my side about what I wanted from the translator things improved slightly however the challenges remained. I have tried to alter the challenges by having a second translator listening to the tapes; however the course of the interviews because of the translations might have influenced some answers gained from the informants.

While the translation posed a challenge, at times this was combined with the informant's willingness or capacity to answer the questions. This was often related to shyness against me or different expectation while we talked. Furthermore they had their own concerns to share with me, at times not related to the question asked. While this posed some challenges at the same time it provided me with valuable information, as they shared their visions on their needs, expectations and desires from the program in their own way. I realized that after one question, at times the women wanted to speak for 5 minutes or longer, for translation this made it more difficult but stopping for translation made the women stop talking and waiting for the next question. That way also valuable information would be lost. Therefore at times the informants spoke for an extended time and the translator did his best to translate all. It helped that another person listened to the tapes in case of these extended answers to see if information was lost.

Especially in the first weeks it was difficult to talk to the women about issues beyond their prime accomplishments and challenges. They were used to answer question to the NGO officers, who in most cases were looking for successful case-stories, and the "obvious" challenges. They were not used to answer questions beyond this relating to their own experiences and opinions. Besides their familiarity with the NGO asking questions, and knowing the desired answer I believe the group dynamics played a role in this too. Within the CBOs everyone was used to let the leader speak to outsiders. And me, clearly an outsider, someone who "looks like the ones bringing the money" and having an influence on both the NGO as on the donor, might be why they answered with comments they thought I wanted to hear, for either the continuation of the program or for more assistance. At the same time they might not felt completely comfortable with me, as I was not part of their society and I was a new face in the village. I noticed a change during the research process, as I stayed longer than other "forengis" (foreigners), people got used to my presence, stopped turning their heads and started to talk more and about different topics. This proved that in order to gain in-depth information and comprehend the reality as much as possible it was needed to stay for an extensive time in the Woreda. I believe a longer time would have enriched the data even more; however this was not feasible for a master thesis study.

I had similar experiences with the staff of the NGO, especially in the beginning; the staff answered any question as if the questions came from the donor. The questions were answered in a manner that was found in the annual report or other correspondence with the donor. It appeared difficult for the officers to answer beyond the framework of the donor. An example is the question about their activities, instead of answering what they did during a work-day they answered: "I am responsible for women development, I monitor and evaluate the progress, or I am writing the annual report". Also questions related to the CBOs were often answered by standardized answers such as "the women are empowered". Only after an extended time, and more informal conversations the officers expressed more in-depth ideas and information about their practices.

While I had similar experiences during interviews with government officials, these talks were complicated by another contextual factor significantly. This is related to the current legal context of Ethiopia. As mentioned in the introduction the work on rights has been forbidden for most NGOs, taking on a rights-based approach terminology is therefore forbidden. The policies have been changed and the way people frame their language is avoiding the use of rights. People I spoke to seemed not to be completely comfortable with the use of the words rights. While the implicitly of the right-based directions was an interesting aspect of this program, it also made it difficult to study especially when discussing the program with government officials.

As a study to rights was not appropriate in this context, I decided to focus on the establishment processes of the CBOs, their relationships with the government offices and the changes it brought in the lives of the women. Also I discussed with the government officials these processes and their role in it. Rights did come up, and when brought up by an official or the women we discussed it more in detail. It was possible to do this study, because while we did not use the word rights, we did discuss them implicitly. Still I think the study is limited by avoiding some language and in a few cases topics. During the thesis I will try and reflect on this a bit more to reveal these limitations to the readers.

2.7.2 My role as a researcher

Until now I discussed mostly the contextual limitations of the research. Additionally I also see myself as researcher having an impact on the study results. I collected, analysed and presented the results in a certain way that has led to the conclusions. I was part of the research process and my presence, background, characteristics, etc. will have influenced the information that was shared with me in the field. The thesis contains my interpretations of the situation in the field. I will try to be as explicit as possible about the impacts this had on the research.

Chapter 3

Introducing the setting: the development program in Ankober

This chapter gives an overview of the program in Ankober and its context, such as the political situation and it provides an introduction to the Ankober Woreda. The main ideas behind the establishments of the women CBOs in the program and how the ideas of the rights-based approach are represented in the program policies are outlined. Finally an overview is given about the situation of women in the Woreda who have been named in the program policies "the marginalized". This chapter thereby presents the setting of the development program in Ankober.

3.1 History of the program in Ankober

The program in Ankober emerged from cooperation between an international NGO (in this study the donor) and an Ethiopian NGO (in this research the local NGO). The first strategies for the program in Ankober were outlined in documents after a partnership agreement between the donor and the local organization was initiated. From the point of view of the donor, having partnerships with local NGOs is one of the key global strategies of the international brand of the organization and therefore also for the country brand. The potential partner organization needs to have a similar mission and similar strategies, thematic areas etc. "*not necessarily identical but similar*".[8] After evaluation a partner is chosen on their comparability, strategies, capacities, experience and internal governance. The local NGO has different motives to start a partnership with financing partners as it is a necessary practice for the continued existence of the organization. Therefore, finding new partners is a strategy as well and an on-going activity. There is searched for organizations that work in similar thematic areas. A potential partner is screened and approached by trying to adapt their proposals to the interest of the potential financing partner. This is not to say that the organization does not have its own organizational directions, however their own directions are aligned more closely to that of the financing body when partnerships are formed. In this case the local organization has taken over the rights-based approach from the donor as approach at the start of the program in 2006. After the partnership was initiated the program policies were created more in detail based on the possibilities in the Ethiopian political context and a detailed situational (poverty) assessment in the Ankober Woreda.

3.2 Political contextual issues for NGOs and right-based directions

Any approach taken by international and national organizations need to be adapted to the political and legal situation. This is in the case of adopting a rights-based approach extra significant as the government takes a central place in ideas of right-based development. VeneKlasen et al. (2004) emphasizes how in a rights-based approach, the human rights system gives legitimacy to the claim of NGOs taking on the approach. This position, which is seen as tackling the root-causes of poverty, thus both directs the NGO while at the same time it gives the NGO a "right to act" in development activities

---

[8] Interview with a representative of the donor agency

and to engage with governments and other institutions. In other words, taking on the position of mediator between the states and its citizens creates space for the NGOs, in the current structure of global ideas on the state, markets, citizens and civil society, a place as actor in development. The Ethiopian political context shows a boundary in the usage of the human right system which makes these claims partially irrelevant. In others words, as the representative of the donor rightfully commented *"especially in Ethiopia it is necessary to contextualize the rights-based approach to the local dynamics and the possibilities the context offers us"*[9]. The following sections will outline the main political issues that influence right-based programs.

3.2.1 The political context for NGOs in Ethiopia

The presence of NGOs in Ethiopia, as known today, can be traced back to the 1960s when both international and national NGOs gained a legal status in the country, in a time in which the state's ineffectiveness became visible (Gebre-Egziabar, 2002; Clark, 2000). During the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s there were only a limited number of NGOs because the Derg-regime governing the country during that time restricted donor involvement (Gebre-Egziabar, 2002). During the 1980s more NGOs started to become involved in Ethiopia. The country was hit by several droughts and famines during these years. Clark (2000) describes how NGOs gained a more critical role as their presence was required for securing donor assistance which strained the regime to accept the NGOs next to the state. Most donors required funding to be channelled through NGOs because the government was not seen as trustful partner. This and the incapability of the government to coop with the recurring droughts led to opportunities for the NGOs to become established with important roles in providing services.

After the fall of the Derg-regime (1991) the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, which is the current government, came into power and Ethiopia went through various policy reforms in the social, the economic and political spheres. The FDRE (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) Constitution has put down the legislation for the federal state which recognizes basic civil and political rights embedded in the global human rights paradigm (Assefa, 2008). The national government seemed supportive of civil society in the first years of the 1990s and established a legal framework for NGOs as democratic institutions and their protection (Nega and Milofsky, 2011). Nega and Milofsky (2011) state that, despite the initial assistance and legal framework civil society has been distrusted by the current government. In 1994 the government declared that most NGOs were not contributing to long-term development goals and were irrelevant and even contradictory to the strategies of the government and the NGOs became under stricter control and monitoring of the government with guidelines for NGO operations in 1995 (Clark, 2000). The role of the NGOs in Ethiopia, in history and in current times alike, in development has been mainly related to service delivery aligned with the state. The policy focus of the state has been on agricultural development and this is still the case today. This view, presently, is based on the assumption that the growth of small-scale agriculture will

---

[9] Interview with a representative of the donor agency

lead to industrialization[10]. Compared to other countries state enterprises, cooperatives and partly owned firms have been favoured over the private sector (Furtado and Smith, 2007). Although the Ethiopian government has been reluctant towards liberalization policies and pressure from outside a PRSP was adopted in 2002 for relief on their enormous debt levels (idem). Nevertheless most efforts of NGOs have been focussed on service delivery alone. Clark (2000) argues that NGOs have initially not been much involved in advocacy roles due to the weakness of the media, the long silenced public debate and the political process that considered activism as opposing the state.

- *The Proclamation for Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies*

In the year 2009 the Ethiopian government adopted a new law, the Proclamation for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies. It is one of the most controversial NGO laws in the world and the first comprehensive law in Ethiopia related to the registration and regulation of NGOs (Nega and Milofsky, 2011) NGO officers in Ethiopia state that there were strict guidance and regulation policies even before the law was implemented, but that this law provides precise legislation for government action[11]. The most cited part of the proclamation is the restriction to work in the areas of human rights and advocacy if the organization receives more than 10% of their funding from foreign sources. This new law encompasses almost all NGOs because as Tafesse (2004) also mentions, in principal all Ethiopian NGOs are dependent on foreign assistance.

3.2.2 Main implications for the rights-based approach in the Ethiopian political context

The main implication of the new proclamation, noticed by people working for several NGOs in Ethiopia, are the restrictions in their work areas and the strict coordination and evaluation of their development program by government officials who could withdraw the licence to operate as legal NGO in Ethiopia. It basically means that, *"NGOs are only allowed to fill the gaps of the government related to service delivery[12]".* Hence the programs need to be aligned with the government strategies and directions. It can be imagined that the restrictions to work in advocacy and human rights affect organizations that work with the rights-based approach. Action taken in this program was reframing the right terminology in their program strategies and all forms of documentation from 2009 onward. The CBOs in this study for example shifted from the work area "women's rights" to "women development". Nevertheless, the real implications of the law on the program are still quite vague for the actors involved in development programs. The only aspect that is clear is that the terminology cannot be used and that a few specific activities are prohibited or restricted. The laws and regulations of the government are extensive and the perceptions of the law and its implications for development programs are ambiguous.

---

[10] Interviews with officers of different NGOs during an internship at the head-office of the local NGO
[11] Interviews with officers of different NGOs during an internship at the head-office of the local NGO
[12] Interview with a program officer of the head-office of the local NGO

There are also regulations in the country, not directly related to NGOs that are also important in right-based programs[13]. Since the 1990s for example a decentralization process took place spurred by historical factors. Power, related to politics, fiscal, and administration was devolved to the different regions in the country. In the beginning of the 2000s power and resources were transferred to Woreda level, which according to Dickovick and Gebre-Egziabher (2010), led to further devolution of authority, fiscal transfers and electoral accountability towards local people. The coordinator of the donor of the program specifically mentions the benefits of this for a right-based program. It means he says, that the Woreda government can be held responsible for their actions and people in the Woreda can claim their right at the Woreda level instead of the National government in Addis Ababa.

3.2.3 Legitimacy to act

The political situation in Ethiopia demonstrates how the legitimacy to act as a NGO in development not only derives from the motivation interest or even "legitimate claims"; rather the legal status, laws and legislations in the country provide legitimacy to act as actor in development. This is especially noticeable in the response of NGOs after the changes in the law, which immediately set in motion meetings, discussions, and policy documents re-writing. The officers had to adapt their strategy, or at least terminology to hold on to their legal status. Several NGOs are closed and their activities are terminated by the government. In the Ethiopian context, in explicit terms the NGOs are seen as service delivery organizations, filling the gaps of the governments. This is heard in the donor's office, the local NGOs office, from the government officials and others having a role in development aid. This view of the role of NGOs is contradictory to the role of a NGO following a rights-based approach as described in the introduction of this thesis. The right-based direction, in Ethiopia and perhaps in other countries, are only possible if implicit in strategies and objectives. The appropriateness of a rights-based approach, as such, therefore becomes questionable in this context.

3.3 An introduction to the Ankober Woreda

After the partnership was initiated to start a right-based program, the Ankober Woreda for the program was selected[14]. The Ankober Woreda is located in the North Showa Zone of the Amhara National Regional State. The capital of the Woreda is Gorebela, 42 Km east from the capital of the zone, Debre Berhan and 172 Km from Addis Ababa the capital of the country. In general people believe Ankober was established by king Yukuno Amlak in 1280s and that it served as an administrative capital where several kings were situated, until King Menelik 2 moved to what is now known as Addis Ababa in 1870 E.C[15]. Besides the stories, a church and pieces of the former palace of King Menelik not much reminds of this impressive history of the Woreda.

---

13 Interview with a representative of the donor agency
14 While this selection process gives interesting insights in how the NGOs selected their area of work with several criteria, that the organization typed as "denial of rights" this process is beyond the scope of this thesis.
15 Information retrieved from the program proposal of the Ankober program

Figure 7: View in the Ankober Woreda in the raining season

3.3.1 Topography and rain seasons

The Woreda has a mountainous topography with altitude ranging from 1200 until 3700 meter. It is spread over 787 km² and consists of 20 Kebele government administrations. Most of the Woreda is considered as rural area, with an exception of the capital Gorebela and the town Alliyu Amba which are seen as semi-urban. The CBOs in this research are located in the two towns Gorebela, Alliyu Amba, and the more rural Kebeles Gorgo and Debedebo. The 4 Kebeles are located in the highland areas. The Woreda has two rain seasons ("Belg" and "Meher").[16] While the region is considered as relatively wet, I was informed that the rain has come much later than usual in the recent years, especially in the year of this research which created difficulties for the livelihoods of people in the Woreda. During the research for example the informants often expressed their worries in relation to the droughts, and the incapability's to coop if the rain would not start soon.

3.3.2 Language and Religion

Most people living in Ankober are part of the Amhara ethnic group (96.6%), and the language spoken is the Amharic language. The religion followed by nearly all people in the Woreda is Orthodox Christianity[17]. This religion is an important aspect of daily life. The church is followed strictly and plays a role in almost every social situation. The church-leaders are among the most powerful persons in the Woreda and are involved in development activities, problem solving and church meetings. An example that showed me the importance of religion was the strictly followed "rule" or belief that on certain days work on the land is not allowed which has significant impact on for example the productivity of the land.

3.3.3 Agriculture

The Ethiopia United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2012 to 2015 report (2011) states that the country's economy is highly dependent on rain-fed agriculture and that this dependency on

---

[16] Information derived from the program proposal for this development program
[17] Idem

rain fall is making the country vulnerable to climate shocks directly related to food security (pp.12). This is also represented in the Ankober Woreda. According to documents of the local NGO the majority of the people in the area experience shortage in food supplies. Reasons given for this shortage are land fragmentation, landlessness, soil degradation, population pressures, unavailability of farm inputs and lack of basic services. Other related problems are low crop productivity and poor productivity of life-stock[18]. To coop with the food shortages people engage in other activities and depend on their relatives. In Gorebela and Alliyu Amba several people are involved in trading and other occupations such as daily labour (fetching water, cooking, collecting firewood for others), or operating a small retail shop, grain mill, small restaurant or liquor provision. In most cases the off-farm or non-farm income generation activities do not provide enough income to support people and their families. The effects of the international crisis can be seen, mainly in the rise of prices; it affects the prices of the crops, materials, and agricultural inputs. According to people from the Woreda prices have doubled and are still on the rise. The most vulnerable people to face poverty in their lives are according to the NGO and the government officers' resource poor farmers, small holder farmers and landless people who are the poorest segment in the Woreda. At the same time the local NGO names women, girls, women-headed households, elders, the landless and children are the most disadvantaged groups.

3.3.4 Main development events in the Woreda

In the last 10 years the Woreda has seen some major changes in terms of development initiatives and connections to other Kebeles, Woreda's and the capital. A main gravel road has been constructed from Debre Birhan, to Alliyu Amba, Gorgo and continuously the Afar National Region. This has made it possible to travel partly through the Woreda by car. Most Kebeles cannot be reached by car and in the raining season any drive beyond Alliyu Amba poses risks. The capital Gorebela and Alliyu Amba have hydroelectric power, and in most Kebeles it is possible to have access to the telecommunication network. The networks are, however, not trustworthy and in Kebeles without power sources the phones are often without battery. Most people lack access to information that affects their livelihoods such as market-prices and opportunities, improved farming techniques, meteorology, their constitutional rights and social, economic, environmental and political issues. Information is gained mainly through public meetings and sometimes the radio and most people in the Woreda are dependent on the messages of the government, the NGO, associations, neighbours and relatives. Taking these drawbacks into account the networks have improved communication possibilities significantly.

Besides the construction of the road, electricity and telecommunication network, the Woreda Government Administration is responsible to implement different types of development projects. For example at the time of the start of the program of the NGO the government implemented several projects in natural resource management, supplying improved technology, improvement of traditional

---

[18] Information derived from the program proposal for this development program

irrigation structures and construction of road, school, health post and skills training centre. The main emphasis of the government has been on agricultural production and productivity and natural resources through knowledge transfer, which is also described in the national plan for development[19]. In the government offices there are "experts" assigned in each Kebele, trained in crop husbandry, livestock husbandry or national resource management. Technology transfer is one of the main priorities of the Woreda government offices[20]

3.3.5 Local civil society organizations

There are also quite a few self-help groups in the Woreda. The most common and well-known are for example "Iddir" and "Iqqup"[21]. These groups have a specified purpose such as helping each-other in case of funerals. These informal institutions are important in roughly everyone's lives. Together with the Church Leaders, Iddir leaders are for example seen as the most influential persons in the Woreda; *"being out of Iddir means for people in the area being out of the society."*[22] While these self-help groups do belong to neither the state nor the market and could be seen as civil society groups and people's organization, the NGO did not mark them as CBOs or peoples organizations. The NGO found that these groups lack a broader economic, social and political agenda and therefore identified the unavailability as strong and independent people's organizations as a major concern for the Woreda.

3.4 The rights-based approach and the women CBOs in the Ankober program

Rights-based approaches can show quite some variety in different organizations. This section will outline some of the main ideas of the donor involved in the program and how these ideas are represented in the Ankober program. In Ankober the local NGO and the donor started an extensive program with several thematic areas such as education, health, women development and food-security. The development program in Ankober can be seen as an integrated program containing several different projects in the same area. In the initial program documents the type of projects that have to be implemented are outlined. The objective of the program in Ankober, set during the creation of the program proposal, is "to *address the structural and institutional causes of poverty and to make institutions more responsible and responsive to people's needs and development*"[23]. The program started on August 1, 2006, and the principles and strategies in the first program documents were especially focussed on rights and changing unfair power-relationships. CBOs were mentioned as an important part of the program strategies to reach the objective. This importance is quite explicit in the first policy documents. For example in the proposal written by the implementing agency the assumed link between establishing CBOs and challenging un-equal power-relations in economic, social, cultural

---

[19] Ethiopia adopted a Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) in which it, related to the economy, envisions: "to build an economy which has a modern and productive agricultural sector with enhanced technology and an industrial sector that plays a leading role in the economy; to sustain economic development and secure social justice; and, increase per capita income of citizens so that it reaches at the level of those in middle-income countries." (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, 2010)

[20] Information derived from the program proposal for this development program

[21] "Iddir is an informal association of people and are focussed on providing assistance with funeral and wedding expenses and Equp are informal saving and credit institutions with a rotating fund contributed by the members in a common pool (Nega and Milofsky, 2011).

[22] Interview with the administrator of the Gorebela Kebele

[23] Information derived from the program proposal for this development program

and political aspects is described; *"The key to rights-based development is demanding fair power relations in economic, social, cultural and political aspects. Therefore, one of the strategies of the program would be establishing independent community organizations, building the capacities of both the community and concerned government agencies and strengthening the relations between the two parties for collaboration and partnership towards sustainable local development".*[24]

The main documents that contain the strategies are made in cooperation with the donor. The donor of the program in Ankober states in their strategy papers that they centre their approach on active agency and the importance of people living in poverty to become aware of their rights and hold duty-bearers to account (ActionAid, 2012). The reason for organizing groups, or in this case CBOs, of the donor is to enhance self-organization and mobilization as citizens, aware of their rights and aware of right-violations (idem). They base this on their theory of change. *"People living in poverty often need to be supported to discover their own power, get organized and connect into movements, publicly demanding their rights from local institutions, national governments and powerful corporate bodies. Human rights need to be matched with the recognition of human responsibilities"* (ActionAid, 2011).

3.4.1 Presence of the donor in the field

While the local NGO follows the approach of the donor, the donor is not often present in the Ankober Woreda. The donor maintains direct relations to the field office of the local NGO. From the notions of officers from both sides, they feel that everything within the program is done in cooperation between the two partners. There are several moments of interaction between the two parties. Officers of the local NGO express that they feel they are part of the donor's agency and that they are the same as any other field office of the donor. *"It is their policies, their guidance, and their ideas that are implemented in the Ankober program"*[25]. The presence of the donor can be seen in the explicit notions of the donor's strategies in all documentation especially in relation to the establishment of the CBOs. The staff of the local field office describes the donor as; *they want you to start from the rural community, that the community and the government offices and us sit together and define the problem and possible solutions and priorities them. This we have to send to them and they will refine based on their own country strategy plan, interest and international direction. If it fits it is yes and if it does not fit they need to refine it. This is all written down in an agreement"*[26].

In the field the actual physical presence of the donor is limited. In practice donor support is given by commenting on documents and at specific times, for example, during review moment's employees of the donor, either from their head-office or from their other "development areas" where they have programs is present. The employees of the local NGO feels the presence of the donor by requests for documentation such as quarterly and annual reviews, and case-studies. There is a certain presence felt from the donor and the local NGO feels strongly the pressure to work according to the guidelines

---

[24] Idem
[25] Interview with a program officer of the local NGO field office
[26] Idem

of the donor. The idea that CBOs need to be present in the area and that the work needs to be done through CBOs is not negotiable.[27]

3.4.2 The necessity of people's organizations: the CBOs

In this case, the guidance of the rights-based approach meant that organizations in the hands of people living in poverty were necessary. In the long term these organizations are organized entities analysing their own situation and claiming their own rights. This means that rather than focussing on specific rights the organization focussed on specific marginalized groups who will define their own rights and thus need to be organized in groups. In this case the organizations are termed "CBOs" due to their legal status in Ethiopia. This legal status could be seen as a main difference between for example other self-help groups and CBOs. CBOs thus have a legal status as civil society organization while self-help groups have not.[28]

As is common in rights-based approaches the program in Ankober focusses on the empowerment of people. In this case, for the program strategies this meant establishing the CBOs. The assessments of the donor and the NGO outlined the lack of strong and independent CBOs as one of the root-causes of poverty. A main objective therefore became "to build and strengthen CBOs which are capable of engaging with government and other stakeholders, and eventually enhance good governance, stand for the rights of the poor and pro-poor policies and practices".[29] In line with this objective 9 CBOs have emerged in the Ankober since the beginning of the program.

3.4.3 The relationship between the CBOs and the government offices: Empowerment and accountability in the program strategies

The objectives in the program strategies show the intention to have a facilitation role, "enhancing interactions between formal institutions and the communities and promoting local good governance that ensures participation, downward accountability, transparency, the rule of law or justice, equity and respect for communities' rights and entitlements."[30] More specifically, women CBOs were planned to be established to assist self-organization and local level problem solving capacity. For this reason the enhancement of both skills as well as assets to build their confidence to challenge right violations. Therefore the local NGO rapports the establishment and empowerment efforts would be focused on increasing possibilities and capabilities through group-formation, skills training, income generation activities, information sharing and non-formal education.[31] The CBOs from the beginning were set-up to enhance women development/rights. Beyond this the strategy plans of the program are not specifying the program processes, the documentation is quite minimal. The policy documents seem to end at the broader ideas on the purposes of establishing CBOs. There are a few emails, pieces of text in the annual reports and plans or other documentations that reveal more. One reason for this is that

---

[27] Idem
[28] Interview with a program officer of the local NGO head office
[29] Information derived from the program proposal for this development program
[30] Information derived from the program proposal for this development program
[31] Idem

the strategy at the moment is implicit and for some part unknown. Both the donor as the local NGO are trying to adapt to the new law, however its implications are not yet clear. What exactly is happening but also what will be possible in the areas of empowerment for example is quite uncertain. At the donor office there was still an interim strategy plan operational and how they would adapt to the new law was under discussion. The field office of the local NGO, was at the moment with guidance of the donor also working on new strategy plans, however this was still in an early stage. The strategy plans lack clarification about the exact meaning of the role of the program officer, the creation of linkages between the government and the CBOs, empowerment and accountability in the program.

3.4.4 The program directions in practice

Policy making continuous during the programs and does not end when the policies are written down, but is a continuous process in the field. While the basic ideas were outlined in the program policies much space was left open for the translations of the program policies into actions. There are procedures that are followed when the program is put into practices and the relevant ones will be discussed in the following chapters.

3.5 The women: exclusion and marginalization

The rights-based approach of the program is focussed on those who are the most marginalized. Among others women were defined as marginalized group. The NGO based their information on their assessment on the situation of women in the area. To take the words of the NGO the community in Ankober is "traditional and patriarchal". Women are still seen as having traditional roles, meaning they perform most of the labor, such as farming, taking care of children, cooking, fetching water, collecting wood etc. The officers of the NGO told me that in most cases decision-making power at the household level and governmental level lies mainly in the hands of men and that there is a low level of participation of women outside their household. These findings are quite in line with other studies to gender-relations in Ethiopia. For example Cherinet and Mulugeta (2002) discuss the lack of control over number of children and that women often have a lower status, lower income, less education, increasingly leading households without resources, not being recognized for labour and lack overall decision-making power. To understand the position of women in society I discussed these issues with the NGO officers, government officials and the women.

3.5.1 Activities and practicalities

The activities of the women to take care of their families are diverse. The role in the household as described above was confirmed by most women. Most women added they worked on their farmland and/or that they did several activities to generate some income. For example: *"I was trying to fulfill our requirements by collecting wood and bringing it to the market, cooking food and local beer for other homes, and fetching water for others."[32]* Most other also indicated some activities such as: being

---

[32] Member of the Eskedar CBO

involved in several farming as well as market activities such as selling vegetables, preparing and selling food and beer. The most common understanding of the women spoken to in this research was that they lived hand to mouth and there was a shortage of income for their daily needs. Most women named problems that were not considered as gender specific but seen daily life challenges such as small plot or no land, sickness, no financial management or alcohol abuse. Other women that I have spoken to shared they had relatively few problems in their lives. Yet all women indicate a work-burden.

3.5.2 Exclusion

Exclusion can occur in different social groups and among different domains. Silver (1995) for example names, among others, as potential excluding domains: "livelihood, employment, earnings, property, credit, land, housing, consumption, education, skills, citizenship, legal equality, democratic participation, family, humanity, respect, fulfillment and understanding" (cited in in Sen 2000).

When the exclusion of women is concerned there is often referred to the unequal gender relations. Beyond the work-load of the women as compared to men the officers often referred to the lack of participation of women outside their household. This was often confirmed by the women. A former program officer explained how difficult it was to bring women to a meeting at the start of the program. She shares: *"I remember a woman who came to the meeting and returned to her home late. The husband closed the door so she had to sleep outside because he did not want her to go to the meeting".* To talk beyond their activities into topics as exclusion faced by the women proved to be a challenge. As I was the "outsider" the women were not always at ease to talk about these topics. Another challenge was that most forms of women exclusion are normalized. Examples are the work-load or the responsibilities of women within the household, male dominance in decision making at household and government structures deeply embedded in the practices of people living in the Woreda. A former program officer explained: "*these topics are always sensitive, and not only that it is also blurred as they would not even notice themselves or tell you or me, it is taboo".* The constitution of Ethiopia in writing grants equal rights for men and women, but a barrier for women is that many women are unaware of their rights in the constitution. Crime against women has been normalized in the society for a long time, violence against women are rape, beating, abduction, and not giving women their share of property during a divorce. For a long time, and still now many women tolerate domestic violence, it is seen as a sign of love for some part. Other HTP as named by the NGO are abduction, rape, wife beating, female circumcision, adultery, alcoholism, tonsillectomy, belief in wizards, too many religious and other celebrations which increase the work load of women. In the income generation CBOs (Eskedar, Poultry Farm and Gorgo Shower) the women talked about the topics rarely and indirectly. The women that are member of the Debedebo WWG were more open about the topics. This is certainly related to the nature of their CBO that focuses on fighting HTP. The topics were discussed during their meetings (see chapter 5), and the women were thus used to talking about their position in relation to men. For example, topics as abduction and female genital mutilation (FGM) came up during the interview. They never, except for two women related this to their own life but to the lives of other women in the village. Related to their own lives women mention the more practical problems. Problems with money for example, they shared was not only because of bad

farmland, in several cases the husband spend their money on alcohol. *"I have good farmland so there is not a problem of economy but I have also small tea home, small cafeteria in this village to sell tea, and other drinks. While I was doing this work my husband was spending all this money and therefore I was unable to be profitable."[33]*

Another domain of exclusion that was often mentioned by the women in this study and the NGO officers was the lack of education for girls in the past but as well in current times. Most women were excluded from education which causes most women to be illiterate. This form of exclusion is felt by most women who considered it as "ignorance" or as one woman put into clear words: *"it's like being deaf when many others can hear"[34]*. At times the women refer to the lack of information: *"I was very poor and living the low life. I had no information and also I had no good knowledge how to work and how I change my life, I was poor."[35]* Finally a recurring topic was the lack of power in decision-making in the households.

In general, in my opinion people lack opportunities in the Woreda, both men and women. However for women, it is even more difficult to open up opportunities due to the issues mentioned above. While the women especially focused on their practical problems, which they related to lacking financial resources, from more in-depth conversations it became clear that most women lacked knowledge and awareness on issues beyond their household and to some extend their localities.

2.5.3 Women's rights and gender equity policies and legislations.

In contrast to the actual situation of women, the Ethiopian Constitution as well as the national development policies include an extensive list of women's rights and the situation of women is prioritized. Oxfam Canada (2012) shows that the constitution of Ethiopia (1995) establishes equal rights of men and women in economic, social and political spheres and that legislation is in place that prohibits discrimination against women, imposing gender-neutral practice in working places and the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs to monitor and enforce programing for women entrepreneurship. Oxfam Canada furthermore outlines how the national development plans (Growth and Transformation Plan 2010/11-2014/15) has sections on women empowerment, participation and ending HTP. Finally the National Policy on Women (1992) shows a plan on the promotion and the protection of women's rights.

3.6 Final discussion of the chapter

Firstly this chapter gave the overall contextual background of the program and the Woreda. Furthermore it discussed how the ideas of the rights-based approach, especially related to CBOs, are

---

[33] Member of the Debedebo WWG
[34] Interview with a member of the Gorgo Shower CBO
[35] Member of the Debedebo WWG

represented in the program policies. Some significant considerations for right-based programs came to the surface:

- The importance of the political context for right-based programing. As this program shows it is not always possible to engage in right's and thus use the strengths of rights as legal or moral claims. Furthermore the view of NGOs as having an advocacy or facilitating role contradicts to the view of NGOs as service provider as is still the case in Ethiopia. At the same time the rights-based approach of this donor and in this program is more focussed on the marginalized that should be empowered to define and successively claim their rights than on specific rights. The ideas of right-based development are thus still relevant for this program, yet its raises the question of the importance of "rights" in these type of development programs.
- Taking on the rights-based approach in this program has directly created the need to establish people's organizations, in this case the CBOs. This implication has not been studied practice to great extent. While there is much literature available on the establishment of for example self-help groups etc. the literature on the rights-based approach does not contain ideas on the relation between the approach and the establishment of organizations.
- The policies that were drafted for the program give much space for different translations in practice. I do not argue this is negative, however, I would like to point out that, since there is still a lack of knowledge on the practical implications, the (un-intended) effects of the program on the lives of the so-called marginalized could be both positive as negative.
- In this case, women are seen as the marginalized group in society. This is based on the disadvantaged position of women as described above. The main ideas of the marginalization of women were more related to their disadvantageous position in relation to men. Furthermore in most cases this position was normalized in daily life. The women thus were seen as not being aware of their inferior position and not aware of their rights.

I will elaborate on the issues addressed in this discussion in the next chapters.

Chapter 4

Interactions between the NGO, the government offices and the CBOS and making institutions more "accountable"

This chapter discusses how the program policies are translated and interpreted by the different actors involved. Furthermore it looks into how the actors enact upon these translations and interpretations. The main focus is the interaction between the actors involved and how meaning is given to the program policies. The chapter is centred on ideas of accountability and government response to claims of women, in this case organized in CBOs.

4.1 Ideas of government involvement in the field

Figure 8: Government Offices in Alliyu Amba

"Cooperation", "collaboration" and "critical engagement" with the government is seen as central by the NGO officers. The main reason for this is that this will strengthen the government's activities to respond to the local needs and creates a long-lasting effect of the program. This in turn, the NGO officers believe, will make the government institutions responsive to the demands for rights from its citizens. In practice this means for the officers that for each of their activities agreements are made with particular government offices such as; the agricultural office, the women affairs office or the microcredit office. More significantly it means that the different "projects" in the program are "implemented" through the government offices (as well as through the CBOs).[36] Each party involved in the program signs a form with written down responsibilities for a specific project and is thereby seen as accountable for their part. For the establishment of each CBO this meant that the NGO cooperated with several government offices in the establishment processes. This furthermore serves their ideas of the creation of linkages between the government offices and the CBOs. "*The CBOs therefore can go to the government and discuss, they can have access to the government offices and therefore the CBOs need to be linked to the concerned government offices*"[37].

To some extent, the NGO officers claim, this manner of working should give the government offices ideas on how development is done in order for them to be responsive: *"we need to set an example for*

---

[36] See previous chapter
[37] Interview with a program officer of the head-office of the local NGO

the government offices so that they can continue in the future and be responsive"[38]. Eyben and Ferguson (2004) mention about "being an example", that government should be encouraged to practice similar behaviour with their citizens, teaching them about equality, non-discrimination, mutual accountability, responsiveness and transparency. Linking ideas of enhancing accountability by encouraging certain practices and the establishment of CBOs, the NGO officers believed the CBOs should be models to show how women development can be enhanced. An example of how this is interpreted and put into action is the establishment of the first CBO. The Eskedar Restock was established they state *"to show the Woreda offices that women CBOs should be established and should be supported"*[39]. Two strings of ideas were interlinked in this example: the idea that CBOs, or marginalized/poor people in groups, are needed in development processes to ensure equal rights for all people and the idea to be a model for the government offices. These ideas together created the situation in which the NGO officers in the Ankober program felt the needed to prove to the government officials in the area the benefits of having marginalized poor people (in this case the women) organized in groups, and involve them in every step of the program.[40]

4.2 Negotiation with the government offices: influences in the establishment of the CBOs

The explicit role of the government offices in the program and therefore in the establishment of the CBOs implies negotiation must occur between the NGO, the government offices and finally the CBOs. In practice this meant that the government has been involved from the moment before the CBOs existed until their current status and progress as CBOs: *"our involvement started at the indication of the target group, the target beneficiaries, and the selection, let's say we are involved from plan drafting up-to implementing the plan".*[41] This consequently meant that the government officials from various offices were part of the negotiation process of each step taken in the establishment of the CBOs and as I will argue in this chapter in server cases decisive in establishment routes of the CBOs. This is quite striking, as this means that in some way the government official (in cooperation with the NGO officers) were the "founders" of civil society in the Woreda. The first discussions and negotiation about each CBO took place between the NGO officers and the government officials. During these discussions the NGO officers proposed the "project" of establishing a women's CBO to the government officers. The type of CBO: income generation CBO or WWG was already decided at this moment based on a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) in which most of the women who became involved in the CBOs had not participated.[42] This essentially means the women did not set the priorities for further development, including for their CBOs. From that moment the government officers came into the picture. As the government officers are seen as main "implementer" further input was

---

[38] Interviews with several NGO officers from both the head-office as the field-office of the local NGO
[39] Interview with former program coordinator of the NGO field office
[40] Interviews with the NGO officers from both the head-office as well as the field-office
[41] Interview with government official from the Woreda Women Affairs Office
[42] During a Participatory Planning Process the needs and requests of the "community" were identified and prioritized. While this process is beyond the scope of the thesis it did influence the process described here. The need for more income-generation or off-farm work was identified in the process. Most members of the CBOs were not involved in the Participatory Planning event in the Woreda. Several people from the government, Iddir, Church, people living in the area, NGO-officers, donor representatives were involved.

asked from the offices. A former program coordinator explains; *"we told them these are our activities and ideas, we need you to come up with a practical idea for its establishment".* The next steps taken by the two parties influenced the establishment greatly: selecting the members for the CBOs and identifying the main purposes for existence.

4.2.1 Selection procedure

As discussed in the introduction, one premise of the right-based approach is to enhance participation of the most marginalized people and empower especially this group to claim their rights. The idea of "targeting" the most destitute people has been the center of other participation and empowerment approaches and critiques have often showed the fallacies of these approaches. The question remains if the rights-based approach offers anything that enhances the inclusion of the poorest segment in societies. In the practices I found several obstacles for this to become a reality. A major question that I came across is; who decides who should be empowered? While in other cases the people's organizations or social movements standing for the rights of the poor might already exists and the NGO chooses to empower these organizations, this case shows a quite different scenario. Since the CBOs are being established, and there are not any similar initiatives within the Woreda, the question rises; how do they determine who will be member of these CBOs? In this case the first decisions on who will be empowered mainly lied in the hands of the government officials involved in the program.

 In the "project proposals"[43] of the separate CBOs in all cases it is stated that the CBOs target the poorest most marginalized segment of society. For the income generation CBOs there is a divergence of the initial policies who stated women in general are seen as the marginalized group. Rather the marginalized were identified on a) being a woman and b) being poor with additional criteria such as "unemployed" in Gorebela and "hard workers" in Alliyu Amba. These selection criteria were set by the NGO officers who had negotiated with the government officials on who should be selected for the program. In Debedebo the WWG, the criteria were quite different in this case and the request was made to select the "strongest" women in the Woreda.

While the NGO officers thus were involved in setting the criteria for the selection process the control over who is selected for the group was completely in the hand of the government officials holding positions in the involved government offices. The reason for this is the lack of knowledge on the NGOs side; *"we lack the knowledge on who meet the criteria, for this we need the government they have this knowledge"[44].* The question if this meant the most marginalized of society were thereby selected remains unanswered. There were some indications this might not have been the case. For example especially in the Alliyu Amba case it came forward that some of the women in the poultry farm already has close ties to the government officials. Several members of this CBO for example stated that they were selected because they were "well-known" in the area.

The role of the selector, the government official, was important as he or she for a large part determines who would be empowered in the process of establishing and managing the CBO. The criteria are open for interpretation and even if the government officials followed the criteria, according

---

[43] There are not actual proposals, the ideas for the CBO are written down in emails or in 1 page documents.
[44] Interview with the coordinator of the local NGO field office

to their knowledge of the living standards of the women, personal relationships with several members might have influenced some of the decisions. Chapter six will go more into-depth of the importance of the selection criteria and selection process from a right-based perspective.

4.2.2 Defining the purpose of the CBO

The overall purpose of the CBOs was set before the members were selected. Either the CBO was a WWG with the already set objective: challenging HTP or an income generation CBO. After the selection procedure the NGO officer with officials from the Women Affairs Office, the Agricultural Office or the Micro-finance Office provided training and gave direction to the newly selected members on how to move forward and establish the organization: *"all the questions we had were answered by the NGO officer[45]".* The groups elected their leader, financer, secretary and committee members as management team for the CBO. Furthermore the WWG made a plan on how to challenge HTP and for the other CBOs decisions were made on how to go from being an income-generation CBO to a CBO with a specific activity to generate income. In the latter cases the NGO officers, the government officials and the new members of the income generation CBOs talked about the more specific objectives for the income generation CBOs. While the NGO officers claimed the women chose their own activities the reconstruction of the decision making process shows this was not exactly the case. I will explain this by the examples of the Eskedar Restock and the Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm.

- *Eskedar Restock*

While there is claimed the women in this CBO made their own decisions on the CBOs activities in reality the members could select pottery, dairy, sheep rearing or a few other activities. The CBO was requested to have a common activity, for the purpose of collective empowerment as well as for the purpose to become a legalized CBO. From the options the interest of the first members was sheep rearing and sheep fattening. The women expected to be most profitable in this activity based on advice given to them by the NGO officers and the government officials[46]. An NGO officer explains that their recognition as a restock CBO demands them to work in sheep restock-activities. However it is not mandatory to focus only on sheep and the NGO advised them to have other income generation activities of their choice alongside of the sheep rearing. Both representatives of the government as well as the NGO add that a purpose of the CBO is to improve the life-stock in the area. The women do not show interest in this latter purpose, rather their interest to work with the CBO is to change their own lives and earn extra income[47]. It therefore seems that the influence in choice for the CBO activity from the government and NGO side was greater than in their comments that the women made this decision by themselves.

---

[45] Interview with a Member from the Eskedar CBO
[46] Interview with a member of the Eskedar CBO
[47] See next chapter

- *Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm*

The decision in Alliyu Amba followed a similar pattern as in the Eskedar Restock CBO. Based on the advice given to them the women voted in favor for the poultry farm over other activities such as sheep rearing[48]. The government offices were responsible for the idea of the poultry farm and the feasibility study. From the beginning onwards there were some challenges with the technical side of the poultry farm and the NGO advised the government offices to reconsider the project. However the government offices were convinced that a modern poultry would be good for the Woreda. The NGO officer states the government officials said the region government was willing to help with the project and convinced the NGO to continue with this project. Similar to the Eskedar Restock the CBO serves a broader purpose which is that the surrounding communities would benefit from the distribution of the improved chicken variety. Likewise the latter was mostly a concern of the involved officials from the agricultural office. The CBO is obliged to work as poultry farm for their legal status as CBO.

Both examples show that the women voted for their main activities. At the same time it is striking that the current activities overlap more with the wishes of the government offices than with those of the women. If asked women would share they wish to have income generation activities, however they do not desire necessarily sheep-rearing activities or a poultry farm. This indicates the influence of the NGO that required a CBO in income-generation, linked with these government offices and thus a broader purpose. The benefits of being recognized as a legal CBO or civil society organization would be that these groups gain more power to claim their entitlements from the government. In the Ankober program the group formation started with the intention to establish legal CBOs interlinked with the government offices. This has (perhaps unintended) meant that there needed to be a broader purpose to serve the society and due to firstly the decision to focus on income generation and secondly to involve the government offices such as the agricultural office or micro-credit office in the decisions the women were given options such as sheep-rearing, pottery, poultry farm or shower. The consequences and implications of the common activities as CBO will be further outlined in the next two chapters.

4.2.3 Cooperation and negotiation between the government and the CBOs

The first significant achievement through negotiation between the CBOs and the government offices (often facilitated by the NGO officer) was that land was in some cases allocated to the CBOs. For example in the Alliyu Amba case, the women received the land for the poultry farm from the government offices, and the offices fenced this compound and installed electricity and water. This was a great achievement for the women (and the NGO)[49]. Likewise land was granted by the government to the Gorgo shower CBO. A demand for land allocation for the Eskedar Restock CBO was also made. During the start of the CBO the government allocated a piece of land to the women. During this time this was seen as a great achievement of the CBO. Land is very scarce and because the women were

---

[48] Group interview with the members of the Alliyu Amba poultry farm
[49] Interview with program officer of the NGO field office

organized they received the land.[50] The women built a common working place on the land. However the land granted to them had to be returned to the government offices for the construction of a new road, and their building was demolished. The only CBO that has never received land was the WWG in Debedebo.

When discussed with the women involved in the CBOs and the government officials it came forward that the officials were also involved in the creation of the CBO by-laws, assistance with writing proposals for their requests, and the provision of technical training through the technical experts. For example experts from the agricultural offices providing support to the Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm and the Eskedar Sheep Restock CBO in Gorebela and the legal office provides support to the Women Watch Group in Debedebo. In practice this meant the government officials are also involved in the daily operations of each CBO.

The Alliyu Amba poultry farm case gives some interesting insights in this cooperation between the government officials and the CBOs. Discussions with the government brought forward the vision of the officials of the "modern" poultry farm as example for development in the town. The government officials do see the CBO as a model for the town. Both the leader of the women association as the administrator of the Kebele stated they monitor closely the progress made by the CBO and they try to provide assistance if they find this is necessary. Part of the role they see for the CBO is to show others how change is possible through establishing a modern poultry farm. As mentioned in chapter 2 the poultry farm faces difficulties with the technical side of the farm. This complexity of the poultry farm gives the government officials more space to intervene. In their opinion they are responsible for guiding the women into the right direction. As mentioned it is mainly in the government office where I heard that the poultry farm is the right direction of the CBO. A former NGO officer told me that at some point the women wanted to change to rearing sheep; however the government stated that this was not good for the Woreda. Beyond this the officials indicate their own ideas of what are right for the CBO for example to build them a meeting hall and they express the necessity to figure out the problem of the incubator. They indicate that the government offices do not know the problem well enough to solve it and in contrast to their comments in the beginning of the program the regional government is not showing to be willing or capable to assist the CBO in its difficulties.

This example shows the influence of the government officials on the progressions of the CBO. It could be questioned if this type of model, a modern poultry farm for economic advancement, the government desires is relevant at all for the women involved. In the next chapter it is questioned whether this involvement of the government offices is not holding back the women due to the technical complexity of the farm and the contradictions to the women's interest. Here the argument can be made that the negotiations between the government and the CBOs leans toward favoring the government's interest in the progresses of the CBOs.

Significant involvement of the government officials is also seen in the daily operations of the income generation CBOs, through for example providing technical training or support. This support is related

---

[50] Interview with a former program coordinator of the field office

to the main activities of the CBOs such as sheep-rearing, maintaining the shower, or poultry. The support these CBOs in practice shows quite some overlap with giving advice on the directions of the CBOs. The leader of the Eskedar Restock for example states: *"new ideas are often generated during the meetings with experts; the result is then given to the members".* While it is not the intention in the program this further shows how the government is sometimes "responsible" for the daily operations of the CBOs rather than accountable to them.

4.3 The role of the NGO in practice: facilitating the process?

As became clear in this chapter the government officials gained quite some space and influence on the program directions in practice. This also relates to the vision of the NGO as solely facilitator in building the capacities of both the state as well as the citizens and enhancing the linkages between them. This part of the chapter will discuss in more detail this role of the NGO and thus the NGO officer in practice and how this bounds their space for maneuver. For example the current officers clearly believe they should only facilitate between the CBOs and the government offices, and let them "stand on their own feet" while in practice their actions are of an intervening nature. I observed the NGO officers in their work, and discussed their actions, thoughts, interpretations and ideas etc. about the program to understand the contradictory roles they play in the field.[51] There are more explanations for their contradictory roles and understandings of these roles. Two important ones were a) the right-based approach as comprehensive theory of change is often not understood or known, rather ideas from the approach are taken as individual parts and b) the practical situation and their knowledge on this situation do not match the ambitious ideas of the right-based approach.

4.3.1 Involvement of the NGO officers in the CBOs.

The previous part of the chapter already revealed the intervening nature of starting the establishment processes of CBOs in the area. Without the ideas for the CBOs (either income generation or WWG) the CBOs would not have been established. Furthermore the officers have set the selection criteria, and were involved in the decisions on the purposes of the CBOs. Additionally they provided management trainings for the members of the CBOs. Similar to the government officials, the NGO officers have played a decisive role in the establishment process facilitating, supervising and also leading the first meetings. The CBO leader of the Poultry Farm for example believes that the NGO officer, especially in the first phase, decided the direction. During the first year a local NGO officer was facilitating meetings in each CBO and slowly the involvement of the officer diminished. With this diminishing involvement of the NGO officers the women became more in control over their own CBO and the meetings. Nevertheless as will be discussed in the next chapter, the NGO officers are still involved in the decision-making processes in the CBOs.

In their own words the officers currently have a coordinating role in the program and provided guidance in the directions taken by the CBOs. The main current actions of the officers are visits to the

---

[51] These topics were often discussed informally. This relates to the challenge in interviews to go beyond of what I would call standardized "donor talk" into their own ideas and their real actions in relation to the CBOs.

sites of the CBOs and attending some of their meetings. The officer communicates mostly with the leaders of the CBOs, and the involved government officials. In this work the local NGO officers are assisted by the donor through the transfer of financial means, ideas and guidelines. While this bounds them in making choices and decisions it also provides them with a structure to work within. The officers in the NGO follow, in their work with the CBOs, their personal action plans and these plans are followed quite strictly. An example of an activity is to discuss the progress with the CBOs and ask them about their progress, their challenges and their successes. The results are short case-studies and general pictures of progress, lacking more in-depth analysis. These case studies are written down in program reports that are sent to the donor. Although the challenges of the CBOs are briefly discussed, in general the documentations about the CBOs simply state some facts. For example*: "n Alliyu Amba a modern poultry farm has been established that supports 32 women.[52]"* More documentation is nearly non-existent.

4.3.2 NGOs officers manoeuvring within their jobs

It must be taking into account that the influence of the backgrounds, abilities and interest clearly played a role in how the NGO officers execute their plans. Their knowledge about the daily lives of people living in the area and the appropriate ways of communication and the limitations and restraints to work in the area enables the officers to be acting in what seems to be *"as effective as they can work"*. A specific example how the officers try to combine both the donor's knowledge and the local realities is seen in the Alliyu Amba poultry farm. While the donor guides them to work with the CBOs, the members of the CBOs interest are often not in line with the original plans. Furthermore the women value other aspects of their life much higher, or are disappointed with the opportunities gained from the CBO. The officer tried to influence the women, by offering them extra loans to stay in the CBOs, which has resulted in the continuation of the CBOs activities. The actions of the officer are in this example bounded by the donor's guidance on the one hand and the actual reality of the member's situations on the other hand. The NGO officer can be seen as actors linking the local context with the international strategy. This is not only the case in how the officers work together with the CBOs; this is also the case for the work with the government offices. The officers explain for example that the donor's strategy tells them to work through the government offices, for the reasons mentioned before. In practice they say there are challenges such as high-staff turnover in government offices, limited time spend by government officials on the program, or limited willingness in some cases.

4.4 Final discussion of the chapter

This chapter discussed the how the ideas behind the program are interpreted and translated by the NGO officers and together with the government officials put them into actions. Both the idea of the government as main actor in development intertwined with the idea that links need to be created between CBOs and the government offices created the situation in which the government offices are

---

[52] Information retrieved from the emails of the local NGO

directly involved in each step of the establishment of the CBOS, and this has quite some consequences.

- An important point of dilemma that exposes itself when engaging with the government is the selection of the members for the CBOs. In the cases presented here the government officers were influential on who would be empowered. While this is not the most preferable situation, it is not necessarily the case the NGO officers would select differently. Nevertheless the criteria "poor" that was given to the officers to select is not specified. The question that need to be asked is how do you decide who will be empowered if the marginalized are not organizing themselves but have to be organized? This dilemma should be examined more in detail. Based on the findings in this research there is no reason to believe taking on a rights-based approach does not enhance the participation of the poorest people in the society nor it enhances them to claim their rights.

- Defining the purpose/objectives of the CBOs proved to be another significant challenge in the program. The difficulty seems to be that the CBOs did not emerged from within the Kebeles as well as the direct involvement of government offices in setting the objectives. Firstly the women became involved after the main purposes: income-generation and/or WWG were already set. Furthermore the women were given advice on the activities they could do together. While the women did vote in favor for their activities it is a more top-down approach than the NGO probably would like it to be. In the income-generation CBOs this led in both the poultry farm in Alliyu Amba as well as with the shower accommodation in Gorgo to quite a different CBO than the women envisioned when they became members.

- in this chapter it could be seen how the direction to build the capacities of the government offices, the creation of links between the new CBOs and the government offices and the ideas on the government as the main actor in development means in this case meant that the government officials are also involved in the daily operations of the CBOs. It poses an important question whether or not this is beneficial for CBOs that are part of civil society to be this much directed by government officials.

The chapter also discussed the role of the NGO more into detail. This showed some important considerations for the program. A question that has to be addressed is the role of the officer in right-based programs. The notion that the NGO is solely a facilitator does not seem to give justice to the practical reality of the officer that has to work in the "development area".

- The challenge of the role of the NGO as solely facilitator is that while there is the interpretation that all should be implemented through the government offices to create the desired conditions for development this at the same time gives room for government cooptation and dependence of the government offices that might have different motivations to establish CBOs not in line with right-based thinking but for example economic growth or "modern" agricultural businesses such as the poultry farm in Alliyu Amba.

- Another important consideration is that, while there are many different factors influencing the actions of the officers in practice and the role they have in reality, one important issue was

paramount in creating a questionable situation. This is the officer's search for balance between the interpretation that the CBO members are responsible for their own decisions and organization versus the explicit involvement of the NGO officers as well as government officers in the establishment of the CBO that would not have been existent otherwise. While the focus on the CBOs making their own decisions and judgments might be preferable in case of already existent CBOs, in the establishment of CBOs with uneducated members this might be over-ambitious. Especially considering the complicated problems some of the CBOs are facing at the moment.

Chapter 5

Empowerment pathways and the daily life experiences as organization

This chapter introduces the empowerment efforts in the program. It brings forward ideas of both individual as well as collective empowerment efforts and the lived realities of the members as individual and as groups in the four different CBOs in different locations. The paths towards independent organizations are described and the perceived successes as well as challenges of empowerment by both the members as the NGO officers and the government officials are exposed and linked with different expressions of empowerment. In the experiences of the CBOs I could identify issues of management, leadership, decision-making, problem solving, ownership and money/saving mechanisms to explore empowerment processes. The chapter concludes that it is important to understand the everyday practices related to empowerment in the program. Here it comes forward that the focus in efforts mainly pointed to enhancing the capacity to act or increasing the agency of the women. There was a strong focus on establishing independent organizations and the experiences of the women to become independent was used a focus to assess the empowerment pathways taken.

5.1 NGO / Government actions and support to enable empowerment processes

Firstly the establishment process in itself was meant to be empowering[53]. This was closely related to ideas of collective action which most commonly is seen as: "voluntary action carried out by groups of people working toward common goals"(see for example Lubell et al. 2002; Swallow et al. 2001; Tanner, 1995 cited in Pyburn et al. 2010). In addition there were actions undertaken to enhance individual empowerment. Here we find that the actions in the program were directed to address the three dimensions of empowerment as identified by Rowlands (1995) namely:

- Personal (building the self, individual confidence, capacity and altering internalized oppression)
- Close relationships (developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of the relationships and the decisions made within it)
- Collective (individuals working together to achieve a greater impact than alone)

In this case the overall objective, as given in the other chapters, was "to build independent organizations capable of engaging with government and other stakeholders, and eventually enhance good governance, stand for the rights of the poor and pro-poor policies and practices" or in other words, capable of influencing decision-making and claiming rights. By focusing on the empowerment of the marginalized in the income-generation CBOs rather than on specific rights (in Debedebo rights are also not defined but a clear link is made to the right to live without violence) most efforts (in each of the three dimensions named by Rowlands) were related to building the independent women organizations. In the efforts of the program different ideas on women's empowerment were addressed,

---

[53] Interview with the donor coordinator and Interviews with several officers from the field office and the head-office of the NGO

and the program officers of the NGO used the different ideas on empowerment interchangeably at different times. This I believe is caused by the lack of defining women's empowerment processes in the program. This part of the chapter focuses therefore on the input from everyone involved in the CBOs in the "empowerment path" to the ambitious aim of independent organization standing for the rights of the poor. These "first steps" needed to be taken to create the conditions for the "desired" change processes. Or the first dimension of the empowerment process outlined by Kabeer (1999) who calls this the preconditions or the resources for choice.

5.1.1 Training to enhance skills, knowledge, awareness and confidence

Trainings given to the CBOs were an essential part of the program. The idea behind the provision of the trainings is both related to their individual as their collective empowerment. This is basically the idea of Charlier et al. (2007) who drafted a methodological guide for women empowerment, stating a person is enabled by more practical and intellectual knowledge and skills to take advantage from potentially arising opportunities.

Figure 9: Training session

Trainings provided were, as mentioned in the previous chapter, operational management trainings to enhance the capacities of the members to manage their own CBOs and specialized technical trainings in relation to the core activities of their CBOs. The first trainings were provided mainly by the NGO officers and the latter by the government officials involved in the establishment of the CBOs.

Additionally, the women members of the income generation CBOs received trainings on micro-business management provided by an external agency: WISE. These trainings were highly valued by the members of the CBOs and often named as most important contribution to their lives. Reason given for this were the practical tips the women received to enhance their own incomes. This training for example included basic business skills, marketing, business planning, record keeping, creative thinking, small business management and vocational skills. The training is specialized on women living in the rural areas involved in credit and saving cooperatives. This training was not given to the women from the Debedebo WWG by WISE. The NGO officer did mention he tried to give a similar training with the manuals of WISE to the CBO. The positive voices about the trainings heard in the income generation CBOs were not heard in the Debedebo WWG.

5.1.2 Provision and accumulation of assets (financial means)

A second important measurement taken by the NGO officers was the provision of assets either in the form of an investment such as in Alliyu Amba in the poultry farm or in Gorgo in the shower accommodation or a provision of capital in form of a loan. Charlier et al. (2007) mention that attaining

assets refers to greater economic power founded in material assets (income/loans/land/tools). This section will focus on the provision of the financial means and the experienced benefits of the women involved.

- *Receiving a loan*

Currently it is possible for the members of each CBO to receive a loan, with small, or no interest. For the women in the Eskedar Restock CBO a revolving fund was made available from the beginning onwards. Half of the loan has to be spent on sheep-rearing activities and the other half can be used to the interest of the women. After the loans are paid back the women can take another loan and the amount left is available for new members. At the time of this research several women complained about the payback time of the loans which they found inappropriate for sheep-rearing purposes.

Loans were initially not provided in Alliyu Amba and Gorgo who became owner of either the farm or the shower accommodation; however as the establishment process progressed loans have been made available in these CBOs as well. A revolving fund became available for the two CBOs in 2009 after several members were dissatisfied with the progress in their organization because the lack of profit from their activities and the lack of practical benefits in their lives. While all the members indicate benefits from obtaining the loan they did not see this as benefits from the CBOs. The loans could be used for any activity of their choice. Often the women indicate to have some small-scale enterprise activities for example selling crops: *"At the time of harvesting season, when the crops are very cheap I buy the teff, and when it is very expensive I sell it. For example now it is 30 birr but in January it was 9 birr so this way I make a profit".* Other examples are selling eggs, preparing local beer, transporting good for others with a bought donkey etc.

In the Debedebo loans were initially provided from the saved resources of the members of the CBOs. Additionally the NGO has granted the revolving fund which gives the CBO the opportunity to grant higher loans to members. Furthermore there have been some awards granted to the 9 women who started the CBO and to the CBO as a whole to motivate them to continue the work and to compensate for the time spend on the CBO instead of other activities that might generate income for them.[54] Similar to the members in the former two CBOs the loans are used to run some activities from which they gain some profit. Most members bought some cattle and some were involved in trading or in preparing some food or drinks that can be sold.

- *Perceived benefits of the availability of the loan*

Initial capital to have income generation activities is seen by the women as essential in bringing desired changes in their lives. Most members state they earned extra income through the activities started with the loans. The exact amount is difficult to measure as the women are not always sure of their starting amount and the amount that is generated now. In each CBO the women are capable or returning the complete loan in time, some making more profit than others. The women say that the loan has been essential in generating enough income to increase their food-intake, education for their children, to buy school supplies and clothing and to save the amount they save in the CBO bank

---

[54] Interview with a NGO officer of the local NGO

account. Some women were even able to build new homes with the extra income and have cattle around their homes such as cows, sheep and chicken. An example of what the loan does for woman is as following: *"I bought a goat and now I am rearing the goat, with the profit I am also working in a small local bar, selling local drinks that is what I am doing with the loan. I earned 1000 birr because when I sell the goat I can give back the loan to the CBO as a whole, so with the profit I am working in the small bar so now I have 1000 birr, also I bought some things for the household, clothing and book for the children, some food, and candle since we don't have electricity".*[55] It must be noted that while there are some "success-stories" in each CBO, and there are many women who share their income has increased a bit, several women share that they are still struggling for example in providing enough food for their families or to buy clothing or books for their children's education.

- *Saving mechanisms in the CBOs*

Saving is not uncommon in the Woreda. Women of all CBOs say they were (and still are) saving in the Iqqup Associations[56]. With the establishment of the CBOs, the NGO introduced another type of saving, namely individual or group savings in order to build both the individual as well as the collective assets of the CBOs.[57] Saving is considered necessary to build independent CBOs that have their own financial resources. At the same time individual saving is considered as beneficial for the members to coop with difficult situations and solve problems that might arise in their livelihoods.[58] All members in each CBO except the Gorgo shower CBO are saving as CBO. In the Eskedar CBO and the Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm the method of saving is quite similar. The women save a certain amount (20 birr Eskedar and 30 birr Alliyu Amba) each month. In both CBOs this money has never been taken out of the bank. While the women in both CBOs are successfully adding an amount to their accounts each month, the saving systems still cause quite a few misunderstandings (figure 10)

The most prominent misunderstanding is that the reason to save money is understood in multiple ways. Similar to the NGO officer the women understand there are two main reasons to save; to help them in time of needs and to have their financial resources in order to be an independent CBO. In both Eskedar as well as Alliyu Amba this caused quite a bit of confusion about the saving. For example in the Eskedar group the savings in this account are at the moment 400 birr for each woman. There is confusion about the right to use the money in the bank account. For example women in the group think that they do not have the right to use the saved money if they remain in the CBO. They state 'only option to use this birr is if they depart from the CBO". The financer gives an example: "one member of our CBO was sick, she wanted to use this money for medical purpose but the NGO officer and others decided not to use this birr". The idea about saving on a bank-account comes from the NGO, the members express that the NGO "knows" and therefore it is not discussed in the group. "We accept the idea to just save and save; we do not discuss this in the group[1]". The NGO officer opposes that the woman cannot use the money of the bank account. He expresses that the women can use up to 75% before leaving the CBO if they have a legitimate reason. It therefore seems to be on the perception of the NGO officer or the management of the CBO what a legitimate reason is. At the same time the savings are not considered as financial resources for the common CBO. For example in Alliyu Amba the women have saved a total of 60.000 birr while at the same time the women claim they are in need of extra investment of the NGO. Their own resources are not considered. The fact that the women do not discuss the purpose of the saving but simply save also indicates difficulties would arise when the CBO has to act on their own.

Figure 10: Misunderstandings in the saving-mechanisms

[55] Interview with a member of the Debedebo WWG
[56] See chapter 3
[57] Interview with a NGO officer of the local NGO
[58] Interview with a NGO officer of the local NGO

In Gorgo saving is a bit more problematic. There is some income from the shower accommodation and this is put on a bank-account. The women are all saving, sometimes up-to 50 birr per month in Iqqup Associations but they are not saving money in the CBO. The reason they give is that they simply did not start this because they do not know how and they did not discuss this in their meetings.

The only CBO that has their own saving system with a clear purpose for using their savings as organization is the WWG in Debedebo. While the main objective is to challenge HTP, the women started to save as well. In the first year the women saved 1 birr per 15 days. They have increased this to 3 birr. Contrasting the other CBOs, the WWG has a clear purpose for their savings; the money saved is used to give loans to members of the CBO, requesting a loan because they face a problem in their lives. It rather seems a type of contribution to the CBO, because the money saved does not belong to an individual, except if one departs the CBO. *"It is impossible for the members to take what they save. If a member wants to drop out of the CBO she can take what she has saved with interest."[59]* The system is set-up by the members themselves, though they had some help from the NGO officer. The original system, only with increased savings is still intact. It comes forward in the accounts of the women that the saving/loan system is very important for the existence of the CBO. The women explain their current system makes the loan possible for all members. *"Because everyone is having the loan, we all need that loan that is why there is not any other objective for the saved money[60]".* The saving is seen as a mechanism to help every member that is in need of the loan. Some woman share that the NGO did give them training to save in another way as well, in an account in which they save money, which is the individual capital of each members. But the leader explains that no-one has started to save in that manner. Some member of the group would like to save a higher amount but there are some women who cannot increase their savings therefore the amount remains 3 birr per 15 days; *"since most members are poor and have small income it is impossible to make the amount higher. But some of us like me like to save 10 birr per month but for most this is impossible. Especially for the ones that are divorced from their husbands it is impossible to save this amount because they are poor"[61].* The amount saved by the women is thus much lower than for the women in the Eskedar or the Alliyu Amba CBO, yet on the other hand there is much more clarity on the purpose of the saving and the current system makes the CBO capable of providing assistance to all its members in time of need, even if there is continuous growth in the amount of members.

5.1.3 Collective action and being part of an organization

As Rowlands (1995) indicated collective empowerment is basically individuals working together in order to achieve a broader goal. In the report "what works for women" (2012) produced by several large NGOs[62] it is mentioned how collective action is seen as the key to for example increase productivity, access to markets, sharing knowledge, information and productive assets.

---

[59] Interview with the financer of the Debedebo WWG
[60] Idem
[61] Interview with the leader of the Debedebo WWG
[62] Action Aid, Care, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, Find your feet, Oxfam, Practical Action, Save the Children and Self Help Africa

The collective empowerment of the CBOs is seen as another major aspect in this case. This was seen in the previous chapter in setting common purposes for the CBOs (though it can be asked if to enhance income would already have been a common purpose). I talked to the women about their perceptions of the perceived benefits of acting as a collective. Most women indicated forming a group was beneficial in their lives. Especially the increased network and new relationships with other women were perceived as positive. The main positive aspects mentioned were: the interaction among the women, sharing ideas, discussion about issues that influence their lives and about how they can improve their lives or solve their problems; *"It is good to avoid poverty by working together instead of individual. Because there is an exchange of ideas and the younger can support the older so this is good of being organized together with other women[63]"*

While the women in each CBO express the positive sides of assisting each other there are quite some differences in the different CBOs in the limits of this assistance. For example in the Eskedar CBO assistance to each-other is related to their income-generation activities. They state that they will try to help each other by sharing their ideas and knowledge. Issues beyond that might be discussed but most women say that they would not discuss their personal issues with the other members of the CBO. At the same time in the Alliyu Amba poultry farm there are several women who feel that the support to each-other has decreased lately. An example that they used to illustrate this was that in the beginning the woman contributed 2 birr per month to help in time of needs, when a member faced a problem but now the women claim this has stopped. They state: *"a member of the CBO said that her husband had died, that is why you have to help me. But she had already divorced her husband. Since we already know that she already divorced we decided not to help her. We disagreed to help and after that occurred; the trend of helping each other beyond our common activity has stopped."[64]*The group that showed most support for each other in times of need was the Debedebo WWG. In this CBO most women feel that whenever they face any problem in their life they can ask the group for assistance, in the form of a loan or even their labor. All women spoken to mention that they can solve any problem in their life with this loan.

5.2 Self-organization and local level problem solving capacity and increased agency

The efforts taken by the NGO were taken to enhance self-organization and local level problem solving capacity: organizations capable of analyzing their own situation and making their own decisions and influence decision-making at other levels. This is closely related to Kabeer's (1999) reference to agency, as a dimension of empowerment, as having the power within to define your own goals and act upon these goals often operationalized as decision-making abilities. In the program the focus often lied, as mentioned, on the individual in terms of economic or financial opportunities and choices. At the same time the "input", mentioned in the previous sections, should enhance this self-organization and

---

[63] Interview with a member of the Debedebo WWG
[64] Interview with a member of the Alliyu Amba poultry farm

build the independent organizations. This section will discuss the daily experiences in the different CBOs related to self-organization and decision-making. This is focused on the collective CBOs.

5.2.1 Management of the CBOs

Each CBO is led by a management team that has been elected at the time of establishment.[65] The management ideas in the CBOs have a quite similar structure. Each CBO has several members (ranging from 5-7) forming a committee and each CBO has regular meetings with all members at least once a month (in Debedebo each 15 days). In each CBO the meetings are used to collect and discuss the individual loans and the savings. The financial side of the CBOs is managed by the financers and / the auditors of the CBOs.

The meetings of the income generation CBOs are often focused on problem-solving discussions for example related to financial obstacles which the members would like to remove/improve. The underlying thought is that the members would like to increase their incomes. Examples of discussion topics for the Eskedar restock CBO during the meetings are: *"for example we discussed the sheep rearing but also dairy, construction of a bathroom, buying materials to sell clothing and preparing local beer"[66].* In Alliyu Amba similar discussions take place. The women in the Gorgo Shower CBO solely discuss their work in their shower accommodation. The topics in the meetings of the Debedebo WWG are quite different from the income generation CBOs and will be discussed separately later on in this chapter.

Figure 11: Meeting of the Eskedar Restock CBO

In each CBO there is a secretary whose main responsibility is the administration of the groups, for example minutes taken. The main decisions taken during the meetings are put in minutes and are signed by the members in for example Eskedar and Alliyu Amba. The documentation is at a minimum; the NGO officers do not seem to pay attention to it. Also for most women the minutes or documentation have no value as they are illiterate. When asked most members and even leaders admit they do not use the minutes of previous meetings.

5.2.2 Leadership

As discussed in the previous chapter the meetings in the beginning were guided by the NGO officers and the government officials who slowly diminished their presence in the CBOs. Now the leaders and financers (and to a lesser extend the others from the management committees) have taken over this role. In most cases the management team show increased capacities in managing the CBOs as will be

---

[65] See chapter 4
[66] Interview with the leader of the Eskedar CBO

discussed here. Only in Gorgo there are quite problematic challenges related to its management. This is mainly caused by the illiteracy of nearly all members, including the financer.

The role of the leader in each CBO is leading the meetings, making plans, discussing these plans with the financer and the committee members and thereafter with all the members in the CBO. There is an immense reliance on the leaders and financers of the CBOs by the other members. In Debedebo, the educational level of the leaders is higher than most of their members. The women in this CBO speak about fate in their leaders because they are educated and therefore strong, *"because she is educated she knows best*[67]*"*. The leaders are the main point of communication between the CBO and other actors. As the leader of Eskedar explains *"I am the one talking with the government officials and the NGO officials. Each activity is communicated with the offices because they supported us from the beginning"*[68].

During the conversations with the members of the CBOs, most expressed enormous dependency on their leaders (often leader and financer) to operate in the CBO and to solve problems. In Alliyu Amba the financer lives next to the poultry farm, the members express that the CBO is completely depended on her. Most members of the CBOs mention that without the leader nothing would be done by the CBO and problem-solving is the main responsibility of the leader. If I ask a bit more about this most agree that they might continue the saving only: *"If the leader does not come up with ideas for activities we would simply save."*[69] The leader they say is besides generating the ideas, seen as capable of requesting and facilitating trainings and other supports. The women state they rely strongly on the leader to get support and to act in the CBO. *"They are giving us good solution, they initiate us to be active, the motivate us, they give us different strong ideas and information"* [70]

In each CBO there were women who were more prominent than others, more willing to give their ideas during meetings or at other times. Others also expressed shyness and feelings of incapability. Women gave comments such as; *"most ideas are the direction which is given by the leaders, I simply observe during the meeting, I expect change and the discussion is always focused on how to change our lives. I just do what they tell me to do."*[71] The lack of education is often given as a reason by members to follow the leaders: *"I am uneducated so if the entire group decides I accept that idea.*[72]*"*

5.2.3 Decision-Making and problem solving

In the income-generation CBOs decisions are made in a similar way. The members discuss the issues or ideas and decisions are made based on a majority vote. Final decisions are almost always made by the members during monthly meetings. The role of the leaders and financers of the CBO in deciding which issues are discussed during the meeting is significantly more influential than the other members and there is quite some influence of the government experts in the ideas and issues that are discussed. For example the leader of Eskedar shares *"new ideas are often generated during the*

---

[67] Interview with a member of the Debedebo WWG
[68] Interview with the leader of the Eskedar CBO
[69] Interview with a member of the Eskedar CBO
[70] Interview with a member of the Alliyu Amba poultry farm
[71] Interview with a member of the Eskedar Restock CBO
[72] Interview with a member of the Eskedar Restock CBO

meetings with experts, the result is then given to the members"[73]. The agenda of the CBOs is pre-set by the leaders, often involving the financer and the committee members who determine the issues to be discussed. During the meetings the other members will be ask to comment on these topics. Once decisions are made on these ideas by majority voting, the decisions are reported to the NGO and the government offices. See figure 12 for an example of how decision-making occurs in Alliyu Amba.

An example of a decision made related to solving a problem was when 18 chickens had died due to cannibal attacks from other chicken due to stress. The problem is related to another problem namely the high and still rising price for animal feed. This makes it difficult to feed the chicken with the varieties they need. The leader and the financer first discussed the agenda together with the NGO officer and a government expert, thereafter all women discussed on the set-agenda point, solving the cannibalism issues. A women explains, *"Today we discussed the cannibalism and the distribution of the chicken and we discuss and everyone knows what is happening, finally we reach a decision and everyone agrees by putting their hand in the air".* The government involvement was significant in the example as the women felt they lacked the capacity to make this decision by-themselves. There were two options to prevent cannibalism, providing the feed, which was not possible for the women, or taking some chicken out of the farm and bring them to the homes of the women. Assistance was still requested from the NGO and the government experts. During the meeting the expert from a government office gave his advice which the women agreed upon. The women, together with the government experts calculated the price for the hens and distributed the hens among their members. The members thereafter had to return the value of the hen to the CBO to equalize the costs and profits of the CBO. It had occurred before that the costs exceeded the profits of the CBO. In this case the CBO financer explains there is not another option than to contribute personally some amount to solve the problem. The costs are than shared. In practice it means that the poultry farm has costs more than it has provided the women with income. This example also shows that the women are not confident to make their own decisions and want the assistance of the government offices for decisions they might also make on their own.

Figure 12 Decision-making processes in the Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm

Similar processes are seen in the other two income generation CBOs. While in the example of Alliyu Amba, though with the help of outsiders, the problem was solved this is not always the case for all problems. Figure 13 gives an example of decision making and problems solving in the Eskedar Restock CBO which led to a more problematic situation for the members involved.

Most decisions made during the meetings relate to the financial problems the income generation CBOs the members perceive. Often the decisions are made to start more and/or different income generation activities. For example the women in the Eskedar Restock decided that they would increase their income from changing from sheep-rearing to rearing cows. The decisions made in Alliyu Amba are also mostly on how to become strong, and how to increase the members. *"The next step would be to get a new working place or building and to buy at least 3 Frisian cows and we can sell the milk to cafés and hotels."[74]* New ideas are not yet generated in the Gorgo Shower Accommodation CBO. While many ideas were generated the women kept emphasizing it was difficult to implement their ideas.

---

[73] Interview with the leader of the Eskedar Restock CBO
[74] Interview with the financer of the Eskedar Restock CBO

In the Eskedar CBO there is much confusion about the time of repayment of the loans and about how the decision was made. This was mostly among the women, but also the NGO officer could not really explain what happened. Both the NGO and the government officials were not aware about the issues members had with the payback time. Some members state that the responsible person for the decision is the NGO officer while the NGO officer states that the women made the decision themselves. The program officer explains: *"we observed challenges to pay back the loan on time, when they faced challenges, some animals died and they could not pay back. To reduce their challenges we advised to divide the payback time in four times"*. The reason given is related to the previous challenges of the group. This was discussed with the government offices and the leader of the CBO. The officer states that the group discussed this but decided to pay back the loan in two times, one time in six months and another half after one year. He adds: *"this is what we finally agreed upon with the CBO, women affairs office and agricultural office and we signed an agreement"*. He states that the women now disagree because of price-escalation. The leader did ask to change it to onetime payment after one year but the NGO refused because they thought this would create problems for the CBO. The officer states that *"the leader did not mention it as a problem but to create the possibility of change"*. He furthermore says it is not the majority of the group that wants this, and that some members have commitment problems which are the actual problem of the pay-back time. The officer thinks: *"the women will not be beneficiary if it is one phase".* Here we come back to the decision making process of the CBO, the leading role of the management team and the involvement of both the NGO officers and the government officials. In this example of the payback time we see that the NGO makes the final decision not to change the time again. Some members admit that they do not talk in the meetings about the issue. The leader is responsible to represent the group at the NGO however she could not convince the NGO officer. The direction is not often challenged. As a group many things are discussed, however not everything is discussed. There is the assumption that the NGO officer knows in detail their problems and needs. For these reasons no alternative solutions to the current problem are sought either by the members or by the NGO.

Figure 13 Decision-making processes and problem solving in the Eskedar Restock CBO

- *Implementation*

In Alliyu Amba and in Gorgo nearly all members expressed disappointed with the CBO or with the progress the CBO is making. In each case they look at the NGO for assistance. In Gorebela the women were generally more positive yet many also expressed their concerns about the implementation of their ideas.

"In the implementation it is disappointing, it would be better if some NGO would help us, when the officer from the NGO came he accept our ideas but in the implementation it is not successful."[75]

In the case of the Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm the leader and the financer express that the groups often discuss, besides problems with the poultry farm (cannibalism, the house, incubation) other income generation activities as they consider the income from the farm to low, or non-existent. They decided during meetings they want to own a mill, grow vegetables, or open a shop in name of the CBO. These topics are discussed over and over again and decisions are made more than once. Once decided the women express they do not know how to act upon these ideas for the farm. It is apparently too complex for the women to realize for example the mill-stone by-themselves. The main problem is seen as financial, therefore they are hoping that the NGO will provide them with this money *"If the organization supports us, we may be establishing mill stone, maybe then the income will increase"[76].* This situation is quite similar for the Eskedar Restock CBO.

Beyond the perceived lack of financial means there is disagreement about the implementation in the CBOs, for example in Alliyu Amba a member shares: *"first during the meeting we agree, and then*

---

[75] Interview with a member of the Alliyu Amba poultry Farm
[76] Interview with a member of the Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm

when we need to do something we disagree". The disagreement on implementation activities seemed to be much more prominent in Alliyu Amba and Gorgo where the women need to cooperate in a common business. The women in Alliyu Amba are raising issues of participation in the group by the other women, or lack of participation of some of the members. Participation outside the meetings is required for the new activities, but who is responsible for which activity is never really clear. It was also the case that while during the discussion the women agree with decisions, during the implementation the women were not aware of all the implications of their decision.

- *Ownership*

In practice various women indicate to have lost motivation to work for the CBO. This is heard several times in their accounts and can be seen for example in the different responses towards meetings. Most members are present every meetings, however only a few say it is important to be there. Others say that they are present to avoid a sanction. Furthermore it is also perceived by the women in each CBO that the responsibility to solve problems is in the hands of the leaders. The leaders and financer of the CBOs do express a sense of ownership; in contrast to several other members they often talk about the CBOs as their own organization, work and decisions. Other members often refer to the lack to solve own their problems. In Alliyu Amba and Gorgo this is mostly blamed on the technical difficulties. In the Alliyu Amba there is for example a problem with an incubator which is seen as beyond their own skills. They rather accept the advice of the government official who provides technical support.

Another complication in the decision-making is the participation and contribution of each member during the meetings. While all members are requested to participate the actual participation is quite unequal. For example some express they have significant roles in decision-making: *"I have informed others that we need to prepare other things rather than chicken, preferably that we make raw material for weaving, cotton to be sold" I always say something important for the meeting."*[77] At the same time there are quite some members who prefer to remain silent, for example because they lack confidence to contribute ideas: *"so many times I am afraid because I haven't done this before, even when somebody else makes a mistake I cannot raise my hand and talk about the problem."*[78] There are also members of the CBO members who are somewhat in between. They are willing to contribute as long as it does not go against the leaders of the CBO. *"In the meeting or our discussion if something is bad I say something to show the badness of the thing. If something is good I support the thing. But sometimes there is a challenge. If saying something that is unwanted because the one who has power is unwilling for us to say what we think if that someone does not like what we are going to say. So that makes it challenging sometimes to talk during the discussion. Even though I like to talk about it but because of the challenge I decide not to speak sometimes.*[79]*"*

At the same time many women mention a lack of time to work for the CBOs in case of a common activity. Women referred to their responsibilities in their household which was they said the reason for their lack of time in the CBOs. This is extra significant for the poultry farm and the shower

---

[77] Interview with a member of the Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm
[78] Interview with a member of the Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm
[79] Interview with a member of the Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm

accommodation which are for some women located at a far distance from their houses. In order for example to keep the poultry farm running; two sons of the financer are taking responsibility for most of the practical work in the farm. The two boys are going to school at the same time and receive a small salary of 200 birr for their work. The boys do the work based on what they learned from the women and the government experts. A lack of feelings of ownership is often related to the activities that do not fit the women's schedule or to the lack of perceived benefits provided by the CBOs.

5.2.4 The different path of the Debedebo WWG

As mentioned the WWG in Debedebo started as a different CBO with the priority of challenging HTP. The differences mentioned so far are the selection of "strong" women already involved at the political level and how the women currently are assisting each other beyond the goals of their CBO.

The women in this CBO received, beyond similar management training; a completely different training namely how the practices could be challenged and the CBO has been adding much more members. The main topics during the meetings are therefore also completely different compared to the income generation CBOs. In the first meetings the plan on how to manage the CBO, how to save and how to challenge the HTP was discussed. During the current meetings the activities as written down in this plan are discussed; *"we have meetings every 15 days and the leader asks all members whether the practices are happening in the village or not just to give information. We tell if we watch if not we cannot tell anything".*[80] Furthermore the women state they try to discuss the law that forbids HTP and the corresponding legal punishments; *"we teach each other about the law and the harmfulness of the practices".*[81]

The loans are important for each woman in the CBO and therefore are also discussed in every meeting; *"each member is asked what they did with the loan and the woman presents to all members what she did with the loan"*[82]. The reason for this discussion on the loan is mainly managing and controlling the quality of their loan system*: "because each individual should use the loan properly we discuss. Also if they face problem providing food for the family they may use the loan to buy food crops and so on. Therefore it is good to control how the loan is used and we ask questions during the meetings"*[83]. During each meeting the leaders of the CBO announce the amount of birr that is saved in the CBO and how much is given as a loan at that time. For each woman there is 68 birr saved at the moment and as mentioned there is clarity on the purpose of the saved money.

Most decisions in the group have been made by the group themselves. There has been one problem for which they requested assistance from the government officials. One person from the management team explained it was a serious problem which could not be solved by the women alone. The problem she states was a conflict between the leader and the financer of the group; *"They were shouting each other that were the only thing. Only because of power nothing else. Mine is better than you and so on".*[84]The government officials told them that the best solution would be to replace the leader because

---

[80] Interview with a member of the Debedebo WWG
[81] Interview with a member of the Debedebo WWG
[82] Interview with a member of the Debedebo WWG
[83] Interview with a member of the Debedebo WWG
[84] Interview with the leader of the Debedebo WWG

the women identified the leader to be causing the problem. In a majority voting the members agreed to substitute the leader. A new leader of the CBO was elected by majority voting.

Decisions made about the daily operations are made by the women themselves through majority voting and are mostly about challenging HTP or their loan/saving system. The women indicate they have ideas to generate more income and similar to the income-generation CBO they have not made plans yet about the implementation. This was by none of the women seen as problematic for the current operations of the CBO though. The government officials or the NGO officers are not directly involved in the daily decisions of the CBO. Nevertheless there is a strong link between the government offices and the CBO. The woman state that working with the government is of utmost importance. They believe that the government has responsibility to fight the HTP. To discuss with the government enhances their work. The law is seen as the most important measurement to solve the problems with HTP. Without the law their work is considered pointless; *"to avoid abduction is impossible if there is not any punishment from the government"[85]*. The relationship with the government goes further though. Nowadays the group is involved in many community development events. When the NGO comes to the village or the regional government has a program to be implemented by the Kebele Government the women are often involved. The government officials ask the leader to discuss during the events in the village and how they could cooperate. The leader gives an example: *"We were teaching other women to build a toilet for each household and also to build a smokeless stove for the households throughout the Kebele".*

5.3 Final discussion of the chapter

 This chapter entailed part of the understandings and practices related to the empowerment paths taken by the CBOs. The focus in the empowerment strategies were mostly aiming at empowering a specific group: the (poor) marginalized women and with an exception of the Debedebo WWG not on specific rights. The efforts were rather intended to build independent women organization capable of analysing their own situation and opportunities and acting upon these opportunities. With the starting position of non-existent organizations the efforts were directed at creating the conditions that would make these organizations possible starting with management trainings for the members.

Other trainings have been focussed on economic aspects and the women in the income generation CBOs gained access to financial means. The CBO in Debedebo gained access to the financial resources as well. In each situation increased individual capacity of women to participate in market activities (and benefit from this) was enhanced through training and access to financial means. They were able to recognize new opportunities, and "exercise agency and choice" in the economic spheres. Women in 3 CBOs started saving. There was no consensus though about the usages of the saved money in 2 situations and in Gorgo the women were not saving in their organization. Surprisingly in the WWG in Debedebo, which did not have an economic goal as core activity, the loan/saving system was the most operational and handled by the women alone.

---

[85] Interview with a member of the Debedebo WWG

Collective action was enhanced in each CBO through working together, interaction with other women and sharing ideas. The income-generation CBO focused on their purpose and economic activities and helping beyond was uncommon or stopped. In Debedebo the feeling of a new social bond was much greater and helping each other in times of needs was common among the 64 members.

In the second part of the chapter current experiences of the women as being part of independent (or non-independent) organizations that were responsible for making their own decisions. Some critical attention points came forward.

- Within the CBOs there is a huge dependency on the leaders. This gives an indication that the empowerment processes do not occur equally within the CBOs. This does not need to be negative, yet in some cases it came forward that topics discussed during meetings were favourable to the leaders and topics urgent for the newer members were not discussed (for example in Eskedar the repayment time of the loan)

- In the income-generation CBOs the decisions are not made independently for several reasons. An important one is the reliance on support from the technical experts and the NGO because the member lacked the capacity to make the (often technical) decisions (or feel they lack this capacity). Furthermore each income-generation CBO the members complain about not being able to implement the ideas they have generated during meetings. Their ideas are all focussed on generating income as a CBO, and in most cases they look at the NGO for more assistance to implement these ideas. There are also other reasons for their difficulties such as unequal participation in the decision-making, disappointment, felt lack of financial means for other activities, lack of feelings of responsibility or lack of time.

- In Debedebo the women are more positive about the decisions made in the organization. Most decisions are made by themselves, and although there are also ideas that cannot be implemented this does not affect the current operations of the CBO that has an established loan/saving system and focussed on challenging HTP. The government officials are not involved in the common decision-making processes in the organization rather they are involved by assisting the women with legal measurements.

Chapter 6

Consequences of right-based development in this program: the right-holders and their relationship with the duty-bearers

This chapter looked into the implications of seeing the women as citizens or right-holders rather than beneficiaries. It addresses the gap between addressing the women as citizens and understanding how the women as citizen will claim their, in this case, already existing legal rights. While building the capacities of the women to act is important to empower them to claim their rights, it is not addressing the underlying internal perceptions about gender relations. Focusing on state-citizen relationships was not necessarily promoting equality. The chapter furthermore addresses how social constructions are not altered through economic empowerment alone. Rather economic empowerment should be interlinked with social and political empowerment processes. The chapter concludes that how power/empowerment operates in the program simultaneously in the economic, social and political spheres must be understood before CBOs are established. Whether or not the women will actually claim their rights in the future is closely related to how issues of power and empowerment were addressed in the establishment processes of the CBOs.

6.1 Women as right-holders and Agents of Change

The women in the CBOs, in right-based theory, should not be seen as beneficiaries; rather the women should be seen as citizens that have rights and entitlements (Piron, 2005 pp.22). Empowerment in this idea can be conceptualized as a process in which the marginalized women, organized in CBOs, are empowered, as a citizen and as a group of citizens, to claim their entitlements and rights. In practice this conceptualisation guided the NGO officers as a long-term vision for the future. There was not directly anticipated on claiming rights, rather "the ability to exercise rights" was seen as a long-term indirect goal of the establishment of the CBOs.[86] In other words the process of women who claim their rights as citizens should eventually be the result of the program. The accounts of the program officers entail still a large gap on this abstract long-term vision and their daily experiences with the practical reality. As the previous chapter showed there are quite some steps that have to be made in between. Rights remained an abstract concept used only frequently in the Debedebo WWG who "claimed" their legal rights in relation to HTP.

Furthermore the possession of rights is not an issue as the current situation tells us that women's rights extensively exist in the Ethiopian constitution meaning the women are prevented through unbalanced power-relations from claiming them in practice. Fox (2005) distinguishes empowerment (as building capacities) from rights (as institutionally recognized opportunities) and states that the concept of empowerment becomes important to enhance the ability to claim rights which is more than being a citizen that possesses rights (Fox 2005 cited in Luttrell and Quiroz 2007). This touches upon an interesting question as the previous chapter showed the efforts of empowerment are focused on

---

[86] Interview with a NGO officer of the field office of the local NGO

the ability to make decisions and act upon these decisions. Here an important gap is exposed as this could also mean that women decide not to claim their right because of existing norms in society related to gender roles and relationships. In several cases the women might not be interested in "right struggles". Here the critique mentioned by Mukhopadhyay and Meer (2008) seems quite relevant as they questioned if the vision of a women as her own entity with rights instead of a women in relation to men could potentially reproduce gender-based- exclusion.

6.1.1 Altering power-relations and forms of exclusion

Right-based development in its premise alters unequal power-relations. In this case the premise would thus be that unequal gender-relations would be ideally altered in the program. The previous chapters already showed that the choices made in the program lead to certain types of CBOs. For example the decisions made to focus on either "poor women" or women in general and to establish either an income-generation CBO or a WWG had a major impact on which directions the CBOs have taken and consequently on the domains of exclusion that were touched upon. This could be seen in for examples the topics discussed by the women during the meetings and whether or not the women discussed exclusion and their disadvantageous position in society.[87] It is not strange therefore that the establishment of either an income-generation CBO or an WWG "contributed" in quite different ways to changing the position of women or the vision of this position in society. The knowledge about these formerly unknown consequences of the choices and actions is providing more insights on the relevance of these choices and actions for the alteration of unequal gender-relations. Here I will explain some of the differences I encountered in the field that lead to more divergence in the translations of the right-based approach and its appropriateness to challenge unequal gender relations.

- *Income generation CBOs*

  The women are almost unanimous on the value of being able to discuss together on how to improve their lives and how they can help each other and themselves. Their focus, though, was found to be very inwardly, on the economic advancement of their members. There is a focus on changing their position in society through economic resources. This has given most (not all) some benefits as discussed, however the accounts of the women quite often state their position changed from a "poor woman" to a "rich woman" rather than in relation to men. In other words their sub-ordination in society was still quite similar as compared to previous times. The successive decisions that were made in the translation of the rights-based approach to establish income-generation CBOs (to focus on "poor women" and to set the purpose to enhance their income) indirectly directed the CBO to focus mainly on the exclusion of women in economic terms.

---

[87] See chapter 5

- *The Debedebo WWG*

  The WWG in Debedebo showed quite a different picture. The dis-advantageous position of women in society was the core of their discussions. The discussion especially focuses on HTP and how this harms all women of society. Examples of other topics discussed are their social relationships, respect for women, women's rights and dignity. The CBO has achieved great successes in banishing female genital mutilation (FGM). Furthermore the women praise the stronger bond between them which they feel has created a better situation for women in the whole Woreda; *"we got dignity because of the CBO, for women in the Kebele. In the beginning males practiced abduction but now if the woman stays along the street no-one takes her so this is a good change for us"*[88]. The WWG in Debedebo shows to focus at points of structural denial of rights (as HTP clearly are) gives the women opportunities to discuss social issues and change the perception and activities that place the women in a subordinate position.

6.1.2 Understanding of the nature of women's sub-ordination

Looking at the differences from the two different translations of the right-based policies the reasoning for the income-generation CBOs could be questioned. Looking back at chapter three of this thesis, the organization based their understanding of sub-ordination on a situational analysis of the position of women in society. While I believe this brought genuine understanding on the domains of exclusion it might not have brought light to how and why the women are excluded in these domains. The comment of Mukhopadhyay and Meer (2008) who point the lack of understanding of the nature of women's subornation in right-based approaches might be important to take into consideration here.

The focus on "poor women" and income put the focus on exclusion from market-opportunities, access to financial resources etc. The focus was therefore on providing the women with market opportunities and financial resources and not on the underlying causes of why they were excluded from these opportunities in the first place. The aspiration was that a strong economic status of these women would eventually also alter the underlying power-relations that put the women in a sub-ordinate position. While there is some truth in this as the individual cases show[89] as it led for example to a feeling of more decision-making power in the households, this was certainly not the case for all women and many women did not mention other aspects of the gender-relationship that put them at a unequal position; for example violence, the role of the women in the household, etc. Also, a bit straightforward perhaps but in a way it also enforces another idea of "natural exclusion" namely that the women needs to bring in income to be allowed to participate in decision-making.

The WWG in Debedebo shows perhaps more success in the actual alteration of gender-relations because the focus on challenging HTP the attention moves to the core of why practices of exclusion take place; the internalized perceptions or natural perception of gender-relations and the roles of women that the women (and men) hold. Furthermore violence against women is perhaps the most severe violation of women's rights and thus a strong moral cause that should be changed for all

---

[88] Interview with member of the Debedebo WWG
[89] See the previous chapter and the next section of this chapter

women. It does not mean violence has not disappeared in the lives of all the members of this CBO and examples show the difficulty to alter the suppression. As one woman shared: *"I am now observing that I watch the right of women so women are respected and also when husband don't respect I watch this when the husband hits then neighbors come together and solve the problems. But at the same time my husband beat me but neighbors can't help me. He hits me but I don't go to government to solve I let the neighbors solve the problems. Since, I got married 17 years ago so it is difficult to complain to the government officials because I am afraid of divorce. Because we live together for a very long time I am afraid of splitting up. I don't want divorce. I keep this as a secret for myself I don't tell them for this reason"*[90]. This example does show that even though the practical situation for some women did not change there are signs of awareness that this is harmful. The example also shows that women with awareness can decide not to claim their rights based on their own "cost/benefit" calculation. This underlines the question if income-generation CBOs would lead to the alteration of gender-relations which is already this difficult for a CBO especially focused on HTP. This is not a new question as Eyben, Kabeer and Cornwall, 2008 mention that for example efforts to empower people economically and politically will only work if the underlying systematic revalorisation of the marginalized is altered and they are recognized (thus by themselves and also by others) as entitled to the same rights and respect as other people. This is also identified by earlier feminist works about women empowerment. Rowlands, 1995 for example mentions in her article on empowerment the contribution of Shrilatha Batliwala who analysed especially women empowerment programs in which she notes that the assumption that power comes through economic strength does not necessarily hold. She mentions that an exclusive focus on economic activities does not necessarily create space for women to see their own sub-ordination, their role and the problems in their lives. I believe that this case also shows that this is questionable which seems to be related to the focus on the domains of exclusion rather than on the cause. Especially related to the alteration of these internalized gender-relations social empowerment seems of utmost importance.

For the definition of social empowerment I refer to Eyben, Kabeer and Cornwall:

"a process whereby people develop a sense of and capacity for agency – 'individual power within' and 'collective power with others' – to improve the quality of their social relationships and to secure respect, dignity and freedom from violence, leading purposively or otherwise to changes in the institutions and discourses that are keeping them in poverty" (2008 pp.8)

This empowerment processes seems to be only directly addressed in the Debedebo WWG and while the income generation CBOs do touch upon enhancing this process indirectly their focus is much more economic empowerment and practical benefits.

6.1.3 Internalized oppression and the importance of economic empowerment

While it is not enough to focus on economic empowerment, it is still of utmost importance for the program to work. For example the focus on the HTP did not take away the importance of economic

---

[90] Interview with member of the Debedebo WWG

empowerment. The reasons for the members to become involved in the CBOs were alike in both types of CBOs namely; economic advancement through the opportunities of loans and saving. Those were the opportunities that convinced women and sometimes their husbands to become a member of the CBOs[91]. In each CBO, but especially the income generation CBOs the women envisioned mostly more income, a higher status within their Kebele (as rich person) and practical improvements in their lives. Most do not mention, unless asked, other changes that might be beneficial for them in terms of gender-relations. This gives an indication of the internalization of current power relations.

Lutrell et al. (2009) mention that as women internalize their sub-ordination their own perceptions might be deceitful and external influence is needed to create a situation of change. While this thus creates a situation of manipulation, demanding rights in an internalized oppression is not likely to emerge from within. The previous section showed that it matters which focus is chosen and how the women are indeed manipulated into a certain direction. Economic empowerment is extremely important in this regard. As the women were mainly interested in economic advancement and practical benefits this should be addressed in a rights-based approach that sees people as their own drivers of change. Addressing the felt needs would enhance people's centred development. While the aim of empowerment can be beyond addressing the practical needs the economic element is a main starting point for the program. This in the program could be seen in the difficulty faced by the program officers to convince women to become members of the CBOs. This would mean the women participated outside their households which was (and still is) uncommon in the Woreda. A program officer for example stated that while members were found, there were also cases in which they failed to convince the women to join the CBOs. In other cases the women who did join the CBOs divorced their husbands because they did not allow the women to participate[92].

"Becoming a member" was for the NGO thus already seen as an accomplishment. The economic aspect was very important in this regard, as more financial resources convinced both women and men that the CBOs might be beneficial for their households and gave them reason for the women to participate in this activity outside their household. The NGO officers therefore shared the opinion that income generation was indispensable for the establishment of the CBOs. This is also heard in the accounts of the women, for example; *"I understand that the CBO is useful because the CBO helps me to solve my problem by giving me the loan so this is a good change for me and therefore I become a member. Now I also participate in the meeting. In the beginning I stayed in the home but now I come out to involve in any aspect with the members of the CBO".*[93] Furthermore as was seen in the case of Alliyu Amba and Gorgo in which the women were disappointed with the economic benefits and extra loans needed to be made available to keep the women as member of the CBOs.

6.1.4 Enabling empowerment processes: central or supportive?

I believe economic empowerment is a main element that should be addressed when establishing CBOs. I question however that economic empowerment should be the main aspect addressed and if

---

[91] See next section on participation
[92] Interview with a NGO officer of the field-office of the local NGO
[93] Interview with a NGO officer of the field-office of the local NGO

the NGO should be the manipulative factor in this regard. Rather I think it should be supportive and perhaps led by the women. The WWG is, I believe, a good example of how this is seen in practice. Furthermore this argument is supported by the differences in the economic activities initiated by the individual women and the economic activities initiated with involvement of the NGO and the government officials.

I understand economic empowerment as defined by Eyben, Kabeer and Cornwall:

"The capacity of poor women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes on terms which recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible for them to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. Economic empowerment means people thinking beyond immediate survival needs and thus able to recognise and exercise agency and choice" (2008 pp.9/10)

In Debedebo economic activities are not the core of their CBO yet they are important to attract new members because it creates opportunities for the members to coop with problems or enhance their livelihood. Practical changes are promised by the elderly members through loans and saving which is reason for each member to join the CBO. The NGO officers and the government officials were not involved in decisions on the activities done with the loans nor do they involve in decisions about the savings. There is very little training received yet all women spoken to express the benefits of the loans obtained through small-scale enterprising activities.[94] It must be noted that more training, such as the training from WISE received by the income-generation CBOs would assist the members to recognize more economic

Figure 14: Collecting the savings in Alliyu Amba

opportunities and enact upon these opportunities. In Debedebo, more than in the other CBOs the loans and extra income are mainly used for immediate needs. The CBO thus shows that the members are capable of managing this financial side of the organization, empowering their members who express appreciation for the opportunity to take the loan and the benefits gained from having the loan.

In the income-generation CBOs a remarkable observation was that most women expressed much more contentment with the individual loans than with their common activity.[95] For example while the women in the Alliyu Amba poultry farm all express hope for the future of their farm there are many negative voices about the benefits it has brought to the women. *"Still now, no change, we are not benefited, started from the beginning of the CBO. We are not desperate we have hope for the future that the CBO becomes profitable and to bring the change. We work hard"*[96]. Despite the hope, several women complain about the lack of a tangible outcome from the farm which triggers concerns for the future. *"We have too many problems with the poultry farm, more problems than we can*

---

[94] See previous chapter
[95] The difficulties of the common activities are discussed in the previous chapter.
[96] Interview with a member of the Alliyu Amba poultry farm

solve.[97]Likewise problems are noticed with the profitability of the common shower accommodation in Gorgo and women in the Eskedar CBO mention that sheep-rearing is not always successful.

At the same time, the women in each CBO claim they gain benefits and improve their incomes through (for Eskedar part of) the individual loans and their individual activities without much interference of outsiders. Nearly all loans are repaid within time. Several women started small-scale businesses and express ideas for improved or bigger businesses in the future. Most women did receive the training from WISE about small-scale enterprise management.

The three examples of the income generation CBOs show that the women are quite capable of being their own drivers of economic changes if they gain access to financial resources (combined with basic entrepreneur training the benefits increase). In contrast the interference of the NGO and the government officials in setting a common economic activity for the women often resulted in decreased motivation due to the lack of practical results. Being organized was beneficial for the women in each CBO to achieve the benefits of the loans. The main reasons for this stated by the women were the possibility to discuss the activities done with the loans, profit made, new ideas and experiences was seen as indispensable for their individual decisions and successes.

I would therefore not take the position that forming women groups focussed on income-generation cannot be a successful strategy as there are many examples of self-help groups that could be identified as successful in generating results such as the women in this study with the individual loans, training, cooperation and discussion in groups.[98] However I found the focus on income-generation alone not necessarily the most appropriate if the intention is to alter the underlying unequal gender-relations. At the same time I believe that government involvement in groups focussed on income-generation is not necessarily leading to CBOs as envisioned by the right-based directions that guided the program. This latter argument will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

6.2 Transforming state-citizen relationships

The re-politicized nature of a rights-based approach places politics and the relationships between the state and its citizen's central in the development efforts in development programs. A political element being, that the marginalized are politically empowered to claim their rights and entitlements (Piron and Watkins, 2004 cited in Luttrell et al, 2009). In chapter 3 and 4 of this thesis it was discussed how these ideas were prominent and given most attention in the program policies as the intention was to establish CBOs that could hold institutions accountable, stand for the rights of the poor and promote inclusion. In most cases, like predicted by authors in their critiques (for example Tsitaka, 2007), the focus in the Ankober program was often on the government offices as main "duty-bearer". For the three income generation CBOs furthermore there was an explicit focus on the relationships between the CBOs and the government offices. In Debedebo the WWG was established within a much broader network. Related to their cause the created network included religious leader, Iddir leaders, government officials, police officers etc. In other words the most influential leaders in the Kebeles were part of the network. The intention was likewise to strengthen relationships between "duty-bearers" and

---

[97] Idem
[98] I would like to refer to studies done on the impact of self-help groups for example.

the "right-holders" though more parties were identified as "duty-bearer" and part of the network of the CBO.

6.2.1 Political empowerment and participation

Claiming rights puts, at least in theory, attention on political empowerment. Political empowerment is defined by Eyben, Kabeer and Cornwall as:

"through increasing equity of representation in political institutions and enhancing the voice of the least vocal so that they can engage in making the decisions that affect the lives of others like them – enhancing their ability to speak about, as well as speak for, themselves, gaining recognition as having a right to engage in the democratic process" (2008 pp. 15)

In the program itself political empowerment comes forward in several interpretations. Ideas that women should be able to affect political decisions, and gain access to resources and services are prominent in the accounts of the NGO officers. More participation of individual women in local politics was not a main objective in the establishment of the different CBOs. It was seen as important for equality based on the right to participate. The CBOs as organizations were expected to participate in political processes that would enhance their right-claiming as well as holding the government accountable.

Participation of the members of the CBOs in local politics was therefore considered as very important as were the linkages between the CBOs and government offices. The main obstacles for the participation of the women were seen as the lack of awareness about their rights, the confidence to speak in public and the lack of participation outside the household in general. The government officials of the Woreda stated that women were encouraged to attend different meetings and to give their comments. An official of the Women Affairs office at Wordeda level stated that despite these efforts the most women either not attend meetings or commented during those meetings.[99] The establishment of the CBOs should therefore contribute to altering the obstacles of women to attend meetings and participate in local politics to ensure more women participating in local politics.

The administrator of the Gorebela Kebele told me that he certainly perceived a difference between the members of the CBOs and other women in the Woreda.[100] The members in the CBOs explained me more about their participation nowadays as compared to previous times. Being outside their household and discussion with other women, NGO officers and government officials increased their awareness of the benefits of participating in meetings. For some, certainly not all, this was also enhancing their level of confidence that their opinions would be accepted. A note must be made that the only members (with very few exceptions) actively participating in political processes were members of the management teams of the CBOs. Nevertheless this meant more representation of women in those processes. Strong examples are the leader of the Eskedar restocks CBO who is nowadays also head of the women association and the financer of the Alliyu Amba farm who is participating in several

---

[99] Interview with a women affairs officer at Woreda level
[100] Interview with the main administrator of the Gorebela Kebele

development initiatives in her Kebele and was for example attending discussion meetings with the government during my stay in the Woreda. The leader of the CBO in Alliyu Amba explicitly mentioned the role of the CBO in this increased involvement; *"my role as leader in this CBO taught me how to work together and change our lives, I learned how to be a leader which helps me to involve also in other responsibilities outside the CBO".*[101] For many other members this was still a future vision alone though. For example there were several women who stated they did never attend meetings apart from the CBOs and several started to attend some other meetings but were afraid to speak during those meetings, often for the reason of *"being not educated enough to have an opinion".*[102]

In Debedebo the situation was different than in the other Kebeles. Similar to the other CBOs mainly the members of the management teams and a few others claimed to be actively involved in political processes. The relationship between the local government offices and the CBOs moved beyond the women participating in meetings to actual participation in local political processes. Both the government officials as well as the women considered their bond "very strong" and based on mutual support. For example meetings were held where the two parties discussed both the activities of the CBO as well as the activities of the government offices and how these activities could be combined and/or strengthened by the assistance of the other party.

The active engagement of some women in political processes showed they were in the definition of Eyben, Kabeer and Cornwall (2008), politically empowered and engaged in decision-making. Nevertheless it is too soon to tell if actual underlying power-relations, that still prevent most women in the CBOs, but most certainly in the Woreda, from participation in the political processes will be altered. While some women crossed a boundary many others did not and while the leaders of the CBOs are nowadays actively involved this is rather an exception than the rule for most women in the Woreda and even in the CBOs.

6.2.2 The linkages between the "duty-bearer" and the "right-holder"

During my stay in Ankober, I identified a strong link between the government offices and the CBOs. For example the income generation CBOs had been able to demand government actions in their favour and the WWG was backed up by legal support from government officials. The question that soon arose though was how this was beneficial for the women involved and whether these connections addressed un-equal gender relations or not.

- *The WWG is provided with legal back-up for challenging HTP*

For the WWG in Debedebo the linkages were not only created with the government offices, rather the new network also included leaders of important social institutions such as Iddir and the Church. The women thus gained legal support from the government offices as well as moral support from Iddir and Church leaders who are influential in the Kebeles. Each involved party signed an agreement that specified activities and the responsible party to execute these activities. The women work alongside

---

[101] Interview with the leader of the Alliyu Amba poultry farm
[102] Being uneducated was called by many women in each CBO as reason not to speak during meetings. Also during interviews they stated this as answer to questions. At times they felt not comfortable to give their own opinion. They referred to the educated people as people who should talk in meetings and make decisions as "they know best".

with the institutions responsible for the law, and enhancing the rights of women to not be subjected HTP. The CBO members believe they are capable of preventing the practices because they are connected to the government. *"We were hearing some of the HTP but it was not possible to stop these practices, but after we came to an organization, to this CBO, we started to stop these practices together with the government."[103]* The created linkages thus give the women strength to challenge unequal gender relations.

- *The income generation CBOs gained access to public services and/or resources*

With the focus on income generation activities the domain of exclusion that was addressed was access to resources and services. In this case the NGO officers interpreted that the government offices were thus to be hold accountable for providing these resources and services. With this idea the linkages between the CBOs and the government offices were thus created. This as chapter 5 outlined resulted in the allocation of land and the provision of technical trainings provided by the involved government offices to the CBOs. An agreement was signed by all parties involved that specified these activities as responsibilities of the government.[104] The linkages between the government offices and the CBOs in these cases did not directly put attention on unequal gender relations. As the cases have shown there is a narrow focus on providing benefits for the women in the CBOs alone while not addressing the underlying nature of the sub-ordination of women.

6.2.3 Advantageous position for the women in the income generation CBOs

From the start of the program until the time of this research the income-generation CBOs were not addressing the underlying causes of the sub-ordinate position of women. While I would not deny the group formation of the new income generation CBOs has led to several advantages for its members; it can be questioned if this will lead to a better position for (poor) women in general in the Woreda. Until now it seems that it led to a better (economic) position for a few women in the Woreda which could also have been achieved without the involvement of the government officials. In each case I would even argue that the involvement of the government created a situation of inequality rather than equality.

While the NGO sees the CBOs as models for the Woreda and the government offices repeat this idea, the idea has never been replicated outside the NGO program and it is not likely other women will start to organize themselves following the examples in the near future. The government services provided to the CBOs are rather an exceptional situation for the women in the existing CBOs than available for women equally. Additionally, while the Eskedar Restock has added several members this is not the case in Alliyu Amba or Gorgo and not likely the case in the near future due to several financial problems in their farm and shower accommodation. In Eskedar the women express complications with adding new members due to the difficulty to transfer the learned knowledge to the new members.

---

[103] Group interview with the members of the Debedebo WWG
[104] In the agreement there are also outline responsibilities for the NGO namely: financing and facilitating and for the women who for example contributed labour, examples given are transportation of materials, fetching of water etc.

In my opinion the new reality for the members of the income generation CBOs poses some moral dilemmas. The land for example would not have been granted to the women if they would not have been organized in the CBOs. While the NGO officers see this as successes in the program I believe these linkages create an advantageous position for the women in the CBOs over other women in the Woreda. Other women do not have the opportunity to gain access to this land nor to the technical trainings. Why do they have more right to this land simply because they are organized? And is it their right to receive these trainings while this will not become available for other "poor" women in the area? Furthermore, is it not motivating the government to provide unequal services to people in the Woreda? Should a right-based program not promote accessible means for all women and not a select group of women?

6.2.4 Potential for growth in the Debedebo WWG

The WWG in Debedebo is the only CBO that seems to be able to add new members without many complications and they have more members nowadays than the other CBOs established in the Woreda. Adding new members is first of all a strategy of the CBO to challenge the HTP *"We become more because we understood that this is important for us to solve our problem, the HTP, this is why we added so many members"[105]* Furthermore the women have a self-sustainable saving/loan system. The loan makes women in the area eager to join the CBO. It helps them to achieve their goals. She explains*: "It is important to have this amount of members in the CBO because each member adds their time when they see some harmful traditional practices in the village, for example if a girl is born she informs the CBO, then we follow up whether or not they commit FGM and we will try to avoid and talk to them, when we think they commit or committed we expose them to the government officials so they can be punished by the police or by government."[106]* The women believe that in general all women can become member, contribute 3 birr per 15 days and receive the loan in time of need.

6.3 Looking towards the future

A main question for people involved in the program is what this means for their future, and for the future in their Kebele or Woreda. This is basically a question that remains unanswered for most part. We cannot look into the future but this study does give an indication, especially for the near future, about possible issues that might arise within the CBOs and their successfulness in achieving the objectives for the establishment of these people's organizations. For example it can be argued, at least in the situations of the Income generation CBOs, the established organizations do not live up to the promises. It can even be said that the more conventional credit-saving self-help groups are quite similar to the income-generation CBO, with less complications because of less interference of the government in decisions and more focussed on the already existing activities of the members involved. At the same time the WWG in Debedebo shows a promising CBO capable of nearly banishing HTP together with a network of government officials and other important leaders,

---

[105] Interview with the leader of the Debedebo WWG
[106] Idem

challenging their position as women in society, adding new members and having a self-sustaining financial system. Here I will look into the views on future support which will give some indication of the futures of the established CBOs.

6.3.1 The view of the women on the support

All eyes of the women in income generation CBOs are on the NGO to provide them with extra capital to start other activities next to their current practices. Especially in the Alliyu Amba farm where, after four years, the members do not believe the farm will be profitable any day soon and in the Gorgo Shower Accommodation CBO in which the women believe there will not be enough profit, the women would like the NGO to make new investments. The women in the CBOs believe that new activities can only start if more support is given. Furthermore the women believe they lack the capacities to solve their own problems "*we lack the capacity to solve our problems; this is why we need continuous support.*"[107] While there were a few women in each income generation CBO that thought the CBOs would be existent in the future, most questioned this, especially if the support of the NGO would stop. The group in Debedebo also makes requests for more support. For example the women would like to own a mill to have more income and they would like to have a meeting hall. However they are more confident about the future. All members spoken to believed they would continue with their practices even if the support would stop. They mention their saving and loan system and say they can operate this system on their own. For this reason they feel less dependent. *"We can use the money we have already saved in the CBO like we do right now."*[108] Yet if they would have the choice they would like more financial support and training.

6.3.2 The view of the NGO on the support

The additional requested financial support will not be provided to the CBOs in the near future. The officers give two main reasons for this. The first reason is that the budget for the program has its limitations and therefore not all requests by CBOs can be answered The second reason given by the organization is that based on the approach CBOs have to learn to solve their own problems and therefore need to find their own solutions. The NGO officers see the lack of capacities to solve problems as a lack of sustainability in the program. I did not hear comments of the NGO officers that showed that the causes of the difficulties by the CBOs were well understood. An officer stated: *"the donor wants the members to manage the CBO by themselves, this is capacity empowerment and ensures the sustainability of the organization, but as you observed the women are illiterate the women cannot read and write, how they are expected to manage by themselves?"* The NGO did arrange an alternative training for the women of the CBOs from lecturers from the Debre Birhan University, on business management. This had much lower costs than the training from WISE. The quality of the training was much lower as well. It did give the women an opportunity to learn more basic skills in group management and small-scale entrepreneurship.

---

[107] Interview with a member of the Alliyu Amba Poultry Farm
[108] Interview with a member of the Debedebo WWG

6.3.3 Dynamics of support and future prospects

In the income-generation CBOS it seems unlikely the women will be able to handle their problems on their own. In some cases this was related to the technical problems or the unprofitability of the services such as in Gorgo, Alliyu Amba while in Eskedar the problems at the moment are mostly related to the capacity to transfer knowledge to the new members. There is a difficult question now on the table that is not addressed or spoken about in the NGO or in the donor offices. The CBOs will not receive funding for their ideas. They need to handle their problems on their own. Yet the way they were established now leads to the women believing they need a common income generation to be a successful CBO, and their current "products" are not giving them this income. Is the NGO right to now say, solve your own problems? On the other hand, the women in the CBO already received much more than other women in the Woreda, should they receive even more? The women believe that now they are organized they are eligible for financial support for income-generation activities. They received investment cost beyond their individual activities, which did not have to be returned. It is not such a surprise that the income-generation CBOs are completely focussed on financial gains and seeing the NGO as investor in their plans. While a former officer expressed hope that the income generation CBOs in the end would become strong and follow the Debedebo WWG example to enhance women rights, how this would occur seems to be one open gap. Unless directions are changed the future of the income generation CBOs are therefore quite uncertain.

The Debedebo WWG seems to be reaching a stage of independence as civil society organization focussing on the position of women in general in their Kebele. While I believe the women could benefit more if they would receive additional training (for example economic and organizational skills such as documentation) the CBO is likely to be able to operate independently in the future.

6.4 Final discussion of the chapter

This chapter first looked into the implications of seeing the women as right-holders rather than beneficiaries. It was showed that because institutional rights for women already exist, an objective for the establishment of the CBOs would therefore be to alter the power relationships that prevented the women from claiming these rights. There was a gap shown with the practices in the program related to empowerment as to create agency and the capacity to act and the objective to empower the women to ultimately claim their rights. This, in this case was related to the internalized nature of unequal gender relations. For example being empowered to recognize opportunities and make their own decisions could still be a situation in which a woman decides within this "natural" position of being a woman not to claim their rights. As the previous chapter showed the intervention activities of the NGO officers in combination with cooperation with the government offices led to the alteration of power-relationships in completely different domains and consequently to quite different situations. The focus on economic empowerment placed the attention on exclusion in the economic sphere and while indirectly this helped the women involved to challenge gender-relations in their household the focus lied on the symptoms rather than the causes of their exclusion. For example the women in the CBOs alone

gained access to financial means and land rather than that the barrier for gaining access to financial means and land was challenged for all women. Contrary the WWG in Debedebo focus on challenging HTP did put the cause, changing the perceptions of women (and men) about the unequal gender-relations at the core of their work. This is quite in line with earlier critiques on program focusing on solely economic empowerment could fail to address the subordination of women (Shrilatha cited in Rowlands, 1995). Yet at the same time as this chapter has shown in case of internalized perceptions on gender-relations the economic aspect is of utmost importance. The women see their problem within the current gender relationships and focus mainly on the economic and practical benefits to improve from "poor" to "richer" without addressing their subordination in relation to men. Therefore to "make sense" for the women to join in the program these issues need to be addressed. The WWG showed however that it as long as the economic needs of the women are addressed the focus on the social aspects was the key to challenging underlying causes. Furthermore each CBO proved to be much more successful in economic improvement if lead by the women alone (with additional training) than with involvement of the NGO or government.

The relationship between the government offices and the income generation CBOs proved to be difficult in more than just the chosen activities for the CBOs. With the government identified as main duty-bearer to, in this case, provide services such as technical trainings and land, a rather unequal and exceptional situation was created for the women in the CBOs instead of for women in general. This created an advantageous position for only a select group of women (and their enterprises). The focus to work alongside the government in Debedebo focused on social issues that affect all women proved to be more in line with the principle of equality. The creation of linkages between the state and its citizens can thus lead to rather different situations depending on the purpose of the linkages. Furthermore the linkages between other (perhaps moral) duty-bearers such as Iddir and religious leaders was creating a more comprehensive network concerned with the issues of women.

The different translations of the right-based direction into establishments of the CBOs showed very different prospects for the future of the CBOs as independent organization focusing on broader social, economic, political issues that affect a marginalized group in society. As shown the income-generation CBOs in this study will not live up to the promises of the right-based directions. I would even argue the right-based directions might have complicated the empowerment path for the women involved in these CBOs as, due to government involvement in their main activities, the CBOs do not show that they will become independent groups in the near future nor will they become ready to have the broader social, economic and political purpose in the Woreda to advance rights for all marginalized women. This chapter has shown that the only CBO that fulfills (to a certain extend) the right-based ideas behind the program policies is the WWG in Debedebo, that shows signs of becoming an independent civil society organization working alongside a network of duty-bearers (both legal as moral) focusing on the causes of unequal gender-relationships.

Chapter 7
Concluding remarks on the implications of the right-based approach for the establishment of women CBOs in the Ankober Woreda

In this ethnographic case-study, four women CBOs were central. The CBOs were not studied as sole entities; in contrast the CBOs were studied as central entities within a rights-based approach. The main objective of the study was focused to gain more understanding of the rights-based approach in practice. Therefore I analysed how the approach was translated and interpreted by the involved local NGO and by the other actors who became involved in the program. Understanding was gained about the usage of concepts as empowerment and accountability in the approach as well as about the creation of linkages between the state and its citizens. The focus on women CBOs furthermore addressed the relevance of the right-based approach in addressing issues of women's rights and gender equality. This chapter will outline the concluding remarks on the implications of the right-based approach for the establishment of the women CBOs in the Ankober Woreda.

7.1 Necessity to establish people's organizations: the CBOs

The program policies entailed that the citizens that are the most marginalized have been denied their rights and therefore need to be organized in groups. In this program women are identified as marginalized and excluded through a situational analysis jointly executed by the donor agency and the local NGO. There is the strong belief that "citizens" can claim their right more successfully when organized in groups, associations or in this case CBOs. The underlying thought is to build strong civil society organizations. These organizations that could stand for the rights of the marginalized women were identified as non-existent at the start of the program. A major implication of the rights-based approach in this program thus was the necessity to organize or establish these organizations; the CBOs. Once organized the women citizens should be empowered to stand for their rights and linkages should be created between the organized women and other institutions that thereby should become accountable to the claims of the women. The ideas of empowerment and accountability were not specified and therefore the implementing officers gained wide space for different interpretations. The creation of linkages between the government offices and the citizens was seen of utmost importance as the CBOs, according to the policies, should be capable of engaging with the government (and other stakeholders) to enhance good governance and stand for the rights of the poor. Furthermore the role the NGO should play is described as facilitative, which meant that on paper the function of the officers was to enhance the interactions between the institutions and the newly established CBOs.

7.2 Government involvement prone to co-optation

In the accounts of the NGOs officers about the responsibility of the state and the necessity to create linkages between the institutions (defined as the government offices) and the CBOs the common understanding in the program was that the government officials needed to be directly involved in each part of the program, including in each step of the the establishment of the different CBOs. To take the words of the NGO officer the government offices should be responsible to "implement" the program's activities. This meant the first action of the NGO officers, to establish the CBOs, was the discussion with the government officers, who thereafter became responsible for selecting the first members for the CBOs and became involved in defining the purpose of the CBOs and their current operations. As this thesis showed cooperation with the government was quite decisive for the program. This means that the right-based directions are potentially vulnerable for co-optation by government officials. To some extend the government officials directed the establishment processes of civil society in the Woreda. Doubts can be raised whether this is beneficial for the women involved. In the next sections of this conclusion I will show how in some cases the program ideas were (partially) co-opted by the government officials involved.

7.3 Deciding on marginalization changes the path of the right-based directions

A major implication of the rights-based approach in this case-study was the inevitability to make a decision on who are the marginalized, who will be part of the program and consequently who will be empowered. This decision had quite some influence on the whole process that followed. Women are marked by an assessment as one of the most marginalized groups of society. Domains in which the women are excluded were identified and the decision was made to organize women CBOs. However, since the policies did not give concrete ideas on how the marginalized should be identified, the NGO officers together with the government officials added another criterion in the cases of income generation CBOs, namely "being poor". Confusion arose when the NGO officers started to use different criteria for the marginalized namely on the one hand the marginalized were women and on the other hand "poor women". The difficulty lies in working at different spheres of exclusion and different spheres of marginalization. The boundaries between women and men are quite visible and the structural exclusion is similar for all women in relation to men in the patriarchal society in the Woreda. "Poor" women, also women, are excluded in a similar way but most likely also in other power-spheres for example access to financial resources or farmland, lack of education or other opportunities. These power-dimensions are not clearly defined though and it is nearly impossible to select based on the criteria "poor" because it is highly subjective. The boundaries of who is among the "poor" women are blurred. The decision about who will be selected is too much controllable for the selector who is given space to define poverty. In this case this resulted in government officials responsible for selecting the members for the CBOs based on their ideas of poverty. Based on this case-study it can be questioned if the government officials should be involved in the decision about who will be empowered as for example personal relationships might influence their decision. At the

same time, even if the NGO officer would have been responsible for the selection process this study entailed no evidence that taking on the rights-based approach necessarily enhances participation of the most marginalized or "poor" of society or that it enhances them to claim their rights.

7.4 The NGO offices and the balancing act between the donor policies and the practical situation

One major dilemma that came back in the accounts of the NGO officers several times was the struggle to balance between the interpretations of rights-based development in which the officers believed the CBOs were responsible for their own decisions and should be independent organizations and the practical situation in which the CBOs emerged through intervention in which they needed to assist in making decisions. The ambitious goal of having organizations that represent the marginalized women and stand for their rights was much broader than visible in the actual situation the officers encountered in Ankober, which did not show signs of self-organizing practices of women. As was shown in this study it was difficult for the NGO officers to comprehend the envisioned empowerment process in which the marginalized are empowered to claim their rights while the marginalized at the same time needed to be seen as their own drivers of change. The notion that the NGO is solely a facilitator did not seem to give justice to the practical reality of the officer that has to work in the "development area". A gap could be identified between the opposing implications of pursuing rights-based development of seeing people as their own drivers of change on the one hand and the intervening nature of establishing CBOs on the other hand. Whether anticipated or not the NGO officer cannot escape from playing a more decisive role in the establishment processes than solely facilitating. An implication of the right-based approach in practice, in this case, is that the NGO is more than a facilitator that enhances processes between the state and its citizens.

7.5 Defining the purpose for the CBOs has a significant impact on the program

Defining the purpose of the CBOs proved to be having significant consequences for the different organizations. Because the CBOs did not emerge from within the Woreda, a PRA that set unemployment and lack of income as main priority of the community, topped up with government involvement and their interest, the main purpose of the CBOs (income generation or challenging HTP) were set before the members were selected. The different forms of exclusion (excluded as a woman or excluded as "poor" woman) was decisive in defining the purpose of the individual CBOs. By adding the criteria "poor", which consequently set the problem as excluded in financial terms, the main purpose was set as income generation CBOs. Likewise the focus on HTP, applying to all women, was reason for the NGO, in cooperation with the government offices, to establish a WWG. The overall objective of each CBO remained to become independent organizations standing for the rights of the marginalized in society. In contrast though an implication of using different boundaries of exclusion such as "being poor" the individual purposes of the income generation CBOs had a starting position restricted to the enhancement of the lives of the individual members. For the income-generation CBOs

furthermore the influence of the government officials was significant in deciding the specific activity for the CBOs such as sheep-rearing or a modern poultry farm as the women took the advice on these activities quite serious. While the women did vote in favor for their activities it is a more top-down approach than the NGO probably would like it to be. In the income-generation CBOs this led in both the poultry farm as well as in the shower accommodation to quite a different CBO than the women envisioned when they became members. This is furthermore opposing the idea that taking on the right-based approach that development would be more in line with the visions of the marginalized.

7.6 Building independent organizations is a challenging process

There are different interpretations about how to empower the women in the CBOs, most often linked to ideas about management, leadership decision-making, problem solving, savings and implementation. The central focus is to establish CBOs that can act independently. Due to the fact that the purpose to be either an income generation CBO for "poor" women or a WWG for all women was set by the NGO the measurements taken to ensure this were different. The efforts, especially in the income-generation CBOs, became focussed on empowering a specific group of people rather than on specific rights. The efforts were intended to build independent women organizations capable of analysing their own situation and opportunities and acting upon these opportunities. With the starting position of non-existent organizations the efforts were directed at creating the conditions that would make these organizations possible or in other words enhancing their agency starting with management trainings for the members and thereafter the CBOs received training on their specific purpose. The government officials were involved in each CBO in providing trainings. Despite that the NGO officers felt the CBOs were yet to overcome many challenges quite some changes occurred in the lives of the individual members due to the membership of the CBOs. For example most members of the CBOs did enhance their capacity to exploit some new economic opportunities. Processes of collective action were also identified especially as in working together, sharing ideas, and interaction with other women in order to increase the "successfulness" of their own actions to change their lives. This was also seen in Debedebo, where the CBO was not established as income generation organization, yet similar to the income generation CBOs the women were able to recognize new opportunities, and "exercise agency and choice" in the economic spheres. Saving mechanisms varied in the CBOs, though the only CBO with a self-sufficient loan and saving system was surprisingly the CBO that did not have income-generation as core activity namely the WWG in Debedebo.

The members of the income CBOs shared they were able to enhance their incomes through individual loans but were not satisfied with the incomes gained through their common CBOs. Management wise each income generation CBO was having some difficulties and the NGO officers, government officials as well as the members thought they lacked the capacity to solve their own problems. Complications were found in leadership practices, decision-making, technical issues, financial sustainability and implementation. In contrast the women in Debedebo were positive about the management and the decisions made by the CBOs. Interestingly the government officials were much less involved in

decision-making processes in the WWG as opposed to the income generation CBOs. In this case the focus was thus on empowerment related to agency. This was in line with the translations of the rights-based approach in which the women should become their own "drivers of change" and responsible for their own decisions.

7.7 The gap between women as agent and drivers of change and the structural nature of women's sub-ordination

In the study a gap was identified between the focus of the program on enabling agency and the capacity to act by the women and the objective to ultimately enable the women to claim their rights. While the alteration of the power-relationships that prevented the women from claiming their rights (which do exist institutionally) was a main objective the practices showed in some case quite another picture. To enable agency and the capacity to act did not mean the underlying causes of sub-ordination were addressed. As was shown in this thesis the women can increase their agency within their current sub-ordinate position, for example by making decisions that alter their position from poor to richer women without addressing unequal gender-relations and thus not claiming her right as a woman.

7.8 Misunderstanding of sub-ordination and the operation of power and adverse implications for the rights-based approach in practice

As mentioned, the actions of the NGOs and the government officials have an intervening nature. Their decisions therefore were influential in the whole establishment process of the CBOs. Basing their actions on the right-based policies did not necessarily lead to the alteration of power-relations that placed women at the sub-ordinate position. I argue that this is related to the misunderstandings or lack of knowledge about this sub-ordination and the operation of power.

The focus on either economic advancement or to challenge HTP led likewise to completely different situations and while the NGO officers for example understood this was related to the nature of the CBOs the underlying dynamics were not comprehended. The hope they expressed that the income-generation CBOs would turn into independent organizations enhancing the rights of women is an example of how the workings of sub-ordination were misunderstood. With the focus on enhancing agency, a main issue that was not addressed was how the CBOs would address the more structural causes of women's sub-ordination. While not considered the different kinds of CBOs addressed these structural issues quite differently:

- For the income generation CBOs the focus was put on economic empowerment and thus on exclusion in the economic domain. The women gained access to financial resources and training and with this assistance the women aimed at changing their lives within their current sub-ordinate position in relation to men. The focus was rather on the symptoms than on the

causes of their exclusion though as the women in the CBOs gained access to financial means (and land) however the reason that they lacked this access in the first place was not addressed and women beyond the CBO remained without this access.

- The WWG focused on challenging HTP and consequently the focus became changing the perceptions of the women (and men) about the unequal relationships in which the women faced violence. This was more focused on the causes (the internal perceptions) of their structural exclusion rather than on the symptoms alone.

Based on this study I would therefore argue that while increasing agency and capacity to act is of utmost importance it does not comprehend the whole process of altering un-equal gender relations. It can even work contradictive as the statement could be made that women are only fully respected if they generate status through income causing the women without this income to be further excluded from society. Without this understanding in the program it is quite logical that there is focused on economic advancement which indeed is also indispensable to the empowerment process of women. This has to be addressed as it is the main interest of the women, not their position in relation to men which they perceive as "natural". However as this thesis has shown the economic aspect of empowerment should rather be complementary to social and political empowerment processes rather than driving the whole process. The WWG showed that as long as the economic needs of the women are addressed the focus on the social aspects was crucial to challenging underlying causes. Furthermore each CBO proved to be much more successful in economic improvement if lead by the women alone (with additional training) than with involvement of the NGO or government.

7.9 Moral duty-bearers are of utmost importance of right-based development for women

Additionally the focus on altering the relationships at the political level proved to be ineffective in the promotion of gender equality in the Woreda. Another gap was found in the identification of duty-bearers at government levels that failed to take into account the internalized gender relationships. While this does not deny the responsibility of the government offices of overseeing that rights are respected this does not necessarily create a better position for women. Even if the governments would follow the law strictly and are accountable to realize the legal rights of women and the women are aware of these rights, this does not mean they will necessarily claim them as was shown by individual examples in the WWG of women who were aware of their rights but still tolerated violence in their own households. Furthermore beyond facing violence other forms of exclusion as for example the amount of work, obligation to fulfil the traditional role of a women, lack of decision-making making etc. take place within households not at the political level and are not easily framed as legal rights. It is here that the right-based approach seems to lose some of its value to enhance women's rights and gender-equality. Here another important implication of the rights-based approach in this program is touched which is related to the rights people have and the understanding of equal opportunities. Some measurements of exclusion such as violence against women, non-participation of women in political

processes can be easily framed in legal rights that speak to most people; the right to live free from violence or the right to participate in political processes. Other forms of exclusion such as the lack of economic opportunities or the lack of access to land make less strong legal cases and the claims will be more of a moral nature. Furthermore for gender-equality it proved to be much more effective to work in a comprehensive network such as the WWG in Debedebo of the members, the government offices, and Iddir and religious leaders that were all working together to alter gender perceptions. These linkages helped the members of the CBOs mainly to help other women who faced gender violence and made the CBO quite successful in achieving their goals.

7.10 Linking the government and CBOs implies both equality and inequality

The WWG in Debedebo showed quite a mutual relationship between government offices and the CBOs. Furthermore in this situation a platform was created involving also other important leaders. The focus on social issues that affect all women proved to be in line with the principle of equality. At the same time the creation of links between the income-generation CBOs and the government created a situation of inequality as the land and services were only available for the women in the CBOs (selected by the NGO officers) which created an exceptional situation rather than the norm for women in the Woreda. The implication that was not considered is that the creation of linkages between the state and the CBOs created very different situations depending on the purpose for which these linkages are created.

7.11 An advantageous position for some women within their subordinated position as women in society is a risk

The reasons to argue that the income generation CBOs created an advantageous position for some women are:
- The CBOs that were established as income generation CBOs were focused solely on their own economic advancement and while this did assist the members in their livelihood, this did not help other women (poor or not) beyond their own members.
- The members of the income generation CBOs gained access to land and technical services of the government offices that remained unavailable to other women (perhaps in similar situations).

These situations gave the government officials a push to grant land and technical trainings to the members. In advancing incomes of only certain people it seems quite unfair to give only these people access to government services. In this case no specific law can be created as the government is not capable of granting everyone land or technical services to everyone who needs it.

7.12 Did the program enhance the establishment of independent civil society organizations or dependent enterprises?

The CBOs that are challenged by difficulties are the income generation CBOs. Major challenges are the knowledge transfer and adding new members to the organizations which mean these CBOs have an inward focus and this focus lies mostly on the economic advancement of its current members. Currently the income generation CBOs are not seen by the NGO officers, the government officials and the members as capable to solve their own problems in the future and implementing the ideas raised by its members have been proving to be difficult. There is great dependency on the NGO officers and the government officials in these CBOs. This dependency seems to be created through the translation of the program policies as the members of the WWG, which was established with a different interpretation of the rights-based approach, feel quite capable of handling their own economic system. The choices made, with involvement of the NGO and the government, on deciding the economic activities for the CBOs and providing investment fund and training on these activities created the situation in which the women believed they needed more investment and more training in order to become profitable in the future. Providing the women with investment money for purposes that were advised by external government officials and telling them this would change their lives was, in my opinion, catastrophic for the women to build an independent organization responsible for their own processes of change. In contrast to the members of the income generation CBOs the women in the WWG were quite confident about the benefits of being a member of the CBOs and about the future of their CBO. At the same time the WWG was the only CBO adding members without much problems and capable of using their own small savings to assist each of their members. Furthermore they were discussing their position as women and making a contribution to other women in the Woreda to challenge violence against women. As this thesis thus shows the different starting positions of the WWG turned out to build a totally different organization than the income generation CBOs while nevertheless bringing the economic benefits that were seen as top-priority by the women involved. Even the other cases, the women showed that they could handle the additional individual loans and use it for improvements in their lives without the CBOs determining the usage of the loans. This indicates that for economic empowerment the women are capable to build on their own local realities. The steps taken might be small but they make these steps by themselves which prevents that they are challenged by technical issues beyond their capacities. As this thesis has shown programs that are guided by the rights-based approach should consider their starting point as successive decisions can lead into quite an independent civil society organization focussed on the promotion of rights as the WWG in Debedebo has shown, or as was especially seen in the Alliyu Amba poultry farm and the Gorgo shower accommodation an inward focussed kind of enterprise that gains an advantage over others by direct links to government offices.

7.13 Gaps between right-based theories and the practices of this development program

The current situation in the program shows that especially the income generation CBOs are not nearly living up to the promise of independent civil society organizations standing up for the rights of the marginalized. There is quite a gap between the promise of rights-based development and creating a situation in which the marginalized claim their rights. There are decisions that need to be made that are not discussed in the theories of the rights-based approach much detail. Decisions on who are the marginalized, what is their common purpose, which rights have been denied, can change the track of development for the people involved. Efforts to enhance empowerment can result in quite different situations. The program failed in the income generation CBOs to create independent CBOs capable of solving their own problems. Furthermore the income generation CBOs were directed inwardly focussed on enhancing the incomes of the members of the CBOs and not altering the more structural causes of exclusion. This showed quite some divergence with the ideas about rights-based development. A cause could be the lack of understanding on rights-based development of the officers involved in the program. Yet looking at the practical working situation of the NGO officers the decision to focus on enhancing incomes and thus focussing on the "poor" women makes sense if the direction that people should make their own decisions and participate in determining the program directions is followed. Economic improvement was important for all women members of each CBO and often named as their sole reason to be a member of the organization. New possibilities to generate income were named as number one priority by people from the Woreda in the PRA of the NGO. At the same time as the officer should see the people as drivers of change, the NGO is also intervening and directing in processes of change as the CBOs need to be established. A question that remains unanswered in the theories on the rights-based approach is how and how much the NGO should intervene to enhance the envisioned processes of change. The program officers in this case seem to draw the line at making the decision CBOs should tackle the issues that were identified by the people themselves. In three cases in this study this led to income-generation CBOs that did not enhance rights-based development processes. This is actually not surprising if the underlying causes of exclusion and the marginalization would be taken into account. As is known by most NGO officers the underlying power-relations that form the basis of this exclusion are internalized by both men and women in the Woreda, in the words of the NGO officer: "it comes natural to them". The women do not name this as their problem, but instead the lack of income is seen as the root-cause problem. The choices of intervention activities from the NGO were quite influential in this regard as could be seen in the decision of the NGO to establish a CBO in form of a WWG. Both the idea as well as the purpose of this group was raised by the NGO. If the NGO is thus intervening, I would argue that the implications that came up in this thesis should guide future programs in their efforts to alter gender-relations. If more attention is paid to these implications and to the structural nature of women's sub-ordination the right-based approach might be more appropriate in the "struggle" to enhance women's rights and gender-equality.

Chapter 8

Discussion on how to move beyond operational challenges when translating a rights-based approach into practices

The past paths and the future perspectives of the CBOs involved in this study gave insights for recommendations for organizations that seek to work with a rights-based approach in advancing women's rights or gender equality. The current CBOs represented different choices made during the establishment process and consequently different processes of empowerment were seen in the field. Here I will discuss my vision on how organizations can move beyond some of the operational challenges when translation the right-based approach into practices.

First I must state that while I do not have the vision of universal rights applying similar situations in each context I do believe rights imply equality or equal rights in a certain locality. If rights are seen as legitimate claims, each person should be able to claim those rights. This means that while there can be plurality in right-based approaches, it must promote equality. Otherwise I believe it is development without the goal of achieving rights. This is in line with the difference stated by Cornwall and Nyamu-Musenmbi (2004) (in the introduction) that where service delivery (in non-right based programs) is focused on securing additional resources, a rights-based approach on a more equal division of the available resources more equally and assisting marginalized to claim their share.

The premise that rights-based approaches focus on treating the causes rather than the symptoms of poverty (Miller, VeneKlasen and Clark, 2005; Kindornay et al., 2012) does not necessarily hold during the implementation. This study showed that the most successful CBO in challenging underlying causes of sub-ordination of women was the WWG in Debedebo while the income generation CBOs were focussed rather on improving their status from "poor" to "rich" person within their subordinate position as a woman. The different translations of the rights-based approach in practice showed how genuine efforts can have contradictory results. More understanding should be gained on how to address the sub-ordination of women. What are the symptoms and what are the causes? Before the establishment of the CBOs a thorough consideration must be made on the focus of the CBOs and how this is addressing the actual causes of exclusion. In the following paragraphs I will outline some considerations that I believe should be made.

While theories on right-based development already address the need to analyse unequal power relations (Chambers 2003; Hughes et al 2005) and the importance of knowing the underlying interests behind the causes of exclusion must be known and altered if rights are to be realized. For example as Pettit and Wheeler (2005) state that to achieve more specific goals such as equal participation of women, land rights or other, in practice the underlying power dynamics and relations that have preserved this denial of rights in the first place need to be altered. Yet in practice this seems to be a

rather complex task. In the field the program officers were sometimes aware of some of the underlying dynamics. For example they express awareness on the internalization of perceptions on the position of women in society. The difficulty was not the knowledge on the forms of exclusion that put the women at a disadvantaged position. The challenge was the next step, answering the question why this exclusion occurred and how the underlying dynamic could be altered. I believe these two latter questions are crucial and need to be answered before CBOs are established in programs following a right-based approach to enhance women's rights and gender equality. In other words it should be clear how the CBOs will address not only the women's agency but also the underlying causes of the exclusion of women.

The conclusions of this study imply that a starting position focussed on the internal unequal gender-perceptions combined with enhancing their capacities to act in economic, social and political spheres is more successful in advancing gender equality or women's rights and thus in the alteration of unequal gender or power-relationships. In this scenario involvement of the government proved to be more important in providing legal assistance alone rather than other forms of involvement. Finally the creation of a network including religious and traditional influential leaders strengthens the women in their efforts. This suggests the need to understand the nature of the subordination of women and to integrate this understanding in the efforts to organize and empower women. In the following paragraphs I will outline how this can be envisioned.

It is here the work of Pettit (2012) and Lutrell et al. (2009) who distinguish levels of empowerment at agency and structure is useful to take into account. Pettit defines as "the ability and agency of individuals and groups to think and act in their own interests"(pp.2) and structure as: "the formal and informal institutions, rules, norms and beliefs that enable and constraint thinking and action" (pp. 2). As Petit (2012) mentions it is easier to address dimensions of agency (more visible) than the structural dimensions of power (invisible) yet underlying positions are not altered if not both types of dimensions and the interplay between them are addressed. Empowerment efforts thus need to take this into account. Empowerment thus should be addressed as a multidimensional process that builds on changes in the economic, political and social conditions that produce issues of poverty and exclusion (Petit, 2012 pp.4).

The results of this study can be placed within these ideas on empowerment at different levels and the interplay within these levels. The dimensions of both agency as well as structural dimensions were addressed in the situation of the WWG in Debedebo. For example the capabilities to act were strengthened through trainings and access to financial means and women participated in activities outside their households. At the same time the group was motivated to challenge the internalized social norms that had put the women at the disadvantaged position through awareness raising, training, and open discussion about this position. This assisted the women in altering the more structural conditions by not accepting these norms. The legal assistance of the government furthermore gave the women strength to alter the norms. On the contrary the lack of focus on the

structural dimensions of power and empowerment obstructed the alteration of unequal power-relations in CBOs that focussed on economic empowerment and agency alone.

From this study furthermore rises the idea that, to promote rights or gender-equality, the NGO still has an intervening role to play in this process. The CBOs all arose from ideas on rights-based development which in some cases generated success while in other cases the CBOs failed to live up to its promises. This thesis has shown that NGOs working with rights-based approaches should look critically at their own role in development processes. This program showed that the involvement of the NGO in the area was directing the establishment of the four CBOs. This directing took different pathways as there were government officials and members of the CBOs actively involved. Some clear intervening decisions were much more successful than others though and the lessons this teaches us can be taken to improve how women development and gender equality is addressed in a right based program. In my opinion the entry point of the NGOs should rather focus on the structural dimensions of exclusion complemented with the dimensions on agency which has happened in in this case in Debedebo. I base this argument on the notion of Luttrell et al. (2009) which states that as women internalize their sub-ordination their own perceptions might be deceitful and external influence is needed to create a situation of change. While this has to be complemented with economic measurements because as Larrea (2005) state only focussing on altering underlying power structures is meaningless if people are not capable of enacting upon new opportunities (cited in Luttrel et al. 2009), I do believe women, if given for example training and a revolving fund, are quite capable of ensuring their own economic empowerment processes. It is here were the facilitation role of an external party seems enough. Altering the underlying power relations is less likely to start without external influence enhancing these processes and therefore I rather recommend establishing the groups around a social or moral issue that affects all women complemented with financial support if the aim is to promote women's rights and gender-equality.

The rights-based approach is an approach that was developed in the international development spheres. This is not to say it is a top down approach but that the understanding of the rights-based approach development programs is mostly based on perspectives of the UN and large development organizations. The NGO officers in Ankober showed great knowledge on development, on the practical situation in the field and even on the exclusion of women, yet the broader ideas on right-based change were not comprehended or fully understood. It was apparently difficult to translate right-based policies into practices that enhance equality in the Woreda. Following the ideas on rights-based development only partially in the Ankober Woreda the establishment processes of especially the income-generation CBOs, might have been complicated. This is shown firstly in the lack of understanding on altering power relationships as described above. However this was also seen in the cooperation with the government offices. For example government involvement and co-optation can lead to rather unequal chances for women in the Woreda if the government support the establishment of CBOs for technical/economic purposes rather than social/political purposes. Lutrell et al (2009) mention how external efforts of empowerment are often problematic because there is room for

manipulation. Likewise as Petit (2012) mentions a risk in empowerment efforts is that the concept can be interpreted and supported in a manner that is adapted to the interests of the more powerful and for example be on a more technical than social agenda. To relate this to this study it was shown that while it was helpful when the government were accountable to laws and legislations that promoted women's rights in other cases the government involvement was decisive and empowerment paths taken by CBOs were more economic/technical than political/social. The technical focus turned out to be rather problematic for the women involved. Furthermore it created an exceptional situation for some women rather than all women bringing us back to the principle of equality. I believe that NGOs should consider for which reason the government is involved in the establishment processes of CBOs and whether this is in line with right-based thinking, creating actual conditions in which all women can claim equal rights and hold both legal (government) and moral "duty-bearer" accountable to grant those rights.

References

ActionAid (2012) *People's Action in Practice*. Johannesburg, Action Aid International. Available online at http://www.actionaid.org (accessed on 21 February 2013).

ActionAid (2011) *People's Action to End Poverty ActionAid's Strategy 2012-2017*. Johannesburg, Action Aid International. Available online at http://www.actionaid.org (accessed on 21 February 2013).

Assefa, T. (2008) Preface. In: Assefa, T. (eds). *Digest of Ethiopia's National Policies, Strategies and Programs*. Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies (FSS). Available online at: http://www.africanbookscollective.com (accessed on 12 February 2012).

Chapman, J, Miller, V., Campolina Soares, A. and Samuel, J. (2004). *Right Based Development: The challenge of Change and Power.* Global Poverty Research Group working paper 027. Available online at: http://www.gprg.org (accessed on 12 May 2013).

Charlier, S., Caubergs, L., Malpas, N. and Mula Kakiba, E. (2007). *The women empowerment approach A methodological guide*. Bruxelles: Commision on Women and Development. Available online at: http://diplomatie.belgium.be (accessed on 13 May 2012).

Cherinet, H. and Mulugeta, E. (2002). Country Gender Profile Ethiopia. Report prepared for Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). Available online at: http://hivaidsclearinghouse.unesco.org (accessed on 13 May 2012).

Clark, J. (2000). *Civil Society, NGOs, and Development in Ethiopia- A Snapshot View.* Washington: The World Bank. Available online at http://siteresources.worldbank.org (accessed on 12 February 2012).

Conway, T., Moser, C., Norton, A. and Farrington, J. (2002). *Rights and Livelihoods Approaches: Exploring Policy Dimensions, Natural resource perspectives 78*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Cornwall, A. and Molyneux, M. 2006. The Politics of rights: dilemmas for feminist praxis. An introduction. *Third World Quarterly* 27(7): 1175-1191.

Cornwall, A. and Nyamu-Musembi, C. (2004). Putting the 'Rights-Based Approach' to Development into Perspective. *Third World Quarterly* 25(8): 1415-1437.

Cornwall, A. and Nyamu-Musembi, C. (2005). Why Rights, Why Now? Reflections on the Rise of Rights in International Development Discourse. *IDS Bulletin.* 36(1): 9-18.

Dickovick, J.T. and Gebre-Egziabher, T. (2010). Comparative Assessment of Decentralization in Africa: Ethiopia Desk study. *Report prepared for the United States Agency for International Development.* Burlington: ARD, Inc. available online at http://home.wlu.edu (accessed on 12 May 2012).

Eyben, R. and Ferguson, C. (2004) How Can Donors Become More Accountable to Poor People? In: Groves, L and Hinton, R. (eds). *In Inclusive Aid: Changing Power and Relationships in International Development,* pp. 163-180. London: Earthscan.

Eyben, R., Kabeer, N. and Cornwall, A. (2008). Conceptualising empowerment and the implications for pro poor growth. *A paper for the DAC Poverty Network.* Brighton: Institute of Development Studies. Available online at: http://www.gsdrc.org (accessed on 12 may 2013).

Furtado, X. and Smith, J.W. (2007). Ethiopia: Aid, Ownership and Sovereignty. *Managing Aid Dependency Project GEG Working Paper.* Available online at: http://www.globaleconomicgovernance.org (accessed on 12 February 2012).

Gebre-Egziabher, S. (2002). The role of civil society organizations in democratisation processes in Ethiopia. *Paper Presented at the Fifth International Conference of the International Society for the Third-Sector Research (ISTR).* Available at: http://c.ymcdn.com (accessed on 12 May 2012).

Goetz, A.M. and Jenkins, R. (2002) Voice, Accountability and Human Development: The Emergence of a New Agenda. *Background Paper for Human Development Report 2002*. Human Development Report Office. Available at: http://hdr.undp.org (accessed on 12 May 2012).

Green, J. and Thorogood, N. (2009). *Qualitative Methods for Health Research. Second Edition.* London: SAGE Pub. Ltd.

Grugel, J. and Piper, N. (2009). Do Rights Promote Development? *Global Social Policy* 9(1): 79-98.

Hammersley M. and Atkinson P. (2007). *Ethnography : Principles in practice.* London: ThirdRoutledge.

Harris-Curtis, E., Marleyn, O. and Bakewell, O. (2005). The Imlications for Northern NGOs of Adopting Right-Based Approaches. *INTRAC Occasional Papers 41.* Available online at: http://dspace.cigilibrary.org (accessed on 10 May 2013).

Hughes, A., Wheeler, J. and Eyben, R. (2005). Rights and Power: The Challenge for International Development Agencies. *IDS Bulletin* 36(1): 63-72.

Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. *Development and Change* 30(3): 435-464.

Kapur, A. and Duvvury, N. (2006). A Right-Based Approach to Realizing the Economic and Social Rights of Poor and Marginalized Women. *International Center for Research on Women*. Available online at: http://www.icrw.org (accessed on 22 May 2013).

Kindornay, S., Ron, J. and Carpenter, C. (2012). Rights-Based Approaches to Development: Implications for NGOs. *Human Rights Quarterly* 34(2): 472-506.

Kitkrmsnn Boesen, J. and Martin, T. (2007). *Applying a Rights-Based Approach: an Inspirational Guide for Civil Society*. Copenhagen: The Danish Institute for Human Rights.

Knuttson, B. (2009). The intellectual history of development. Towards a widening potential repertoire. *Perspectives on Development Cooperation in Africa, 13*. Available online at: http://www.gu.se (accessed on 13 May 2012).

Ljungman, C.M. (2004). Applying a Rights-based approachto Development: Concepts and Principles. *Conference Paper: The Winners and Losers from Rights-Based Approaches to Development.* Available online at: http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk (accessed on 23 May 2012).

Luttrell, C. and Quiroz, S. (2007). Understanding and Operationalising Empowerment. *ODI paper for the SDC Poverty-Wellbeing Platform.* In: Luttrell, C., Quiroz, S., Scrutton, C. and Bird, K. (eds). (2009). Understanding and operationalising empowerment. *Working Paper 308.* London: Overseas Development Institute. Available online at: http://www.odi.org.uk (accessed on 9 May 2012).

Luttrell, C., Quiroz, S., Scrutton, C. and Bird, K. (2009). Understanding and operationalising empowerment. *Working Paper 308.* London: Overseas Development Institute. Available at: .http://www.odi.org.uk (accessed on 9 May 2012).

McGee, R. (2004). Unpacking Policy: actors, knowledge and spaces. In: McGee, R. (eds). *Unpacking policy : knowledge, actors, and spaces in poverty reduction in Uganda and Nigeria,* pp. 1-26. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

Miller, V., VeneKlasen, L. and Clark, C. (2005). Rights-based Development: Linking Rights and Participation — Challenges in Thinking and Action. *IDS Bulletin* 36(1): 31-40.

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (2010) Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) 2010/11-2014/15 Draft. Available online at http://www.ethiopians.com (accessed on 12 May 2013).

Mitlin, D and Hickey, S. (2009). Introduction. In: Mitlin, D and Hickey, S. (eds) *Right-Based Approaches to Development Exploring the Potential and Pitfalls*, 3-19. Sterlin: Kumarian Press.

Mitlin, D and Patel, S. (2005). Re-interpreting the rights-based approach- a grassroots perspective on rights and development. *Working Paper Series 22, Global Poverty Research Group of the Economic and Social Research Council*. Available online at: http://www.gprg.org (accessed on 13 May 2012).

Mohan, G. (2002) "The disappointments of civil society: the politics of NGO intervention in northern Ghana". *Political Geography* 21(1): 125–154.

Moser, C. (2004). Rights, Power, and Poverty Reduction. In: Alson, R. (eds). *Power, Rights and Poverty: Concepts and Connections,* pp. 29-50. Washington: The World Bank. Available online at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org (accessed on 13 May 2013).

Moser, C., Norton, A., Conway, T., Ferguson, C. and Vizard, P. (2001). *To Claim Our Rights: livelihood security, human rights and sustainable development.* London: Overseas Development Institute. Available online at: http://www.odi.org.uk (accessed on 13 May 3013).

Mukhopadhyay, M. and Meer, S. (2008). Introduction: Gender, rights and development. In: Mukhopadhyay, M. and Meer, S. (eds). *Gender, rights and development: a global sourcebook*, pp. 11-25. Amsterdam: KIT publishers. Available online at: http://www.kit.nl (accessed on 13 May 2013).

Nega, B. Milofsky, C. (2011). Ethiopia's anti-NGO law and its consequences for economic development. *Community Development Journal* 46(2): 33-48.

Oxfam Canada (2012). *Country Profile Ethiopia*. Available online at: http://www.oxfam.ca (accessed on 23 February 2013).

Peet, R. and Hartwick, E. (2009). *Theories of Development: Arguments, Contentions. Alternatives*. New York: Guilford Press.

Pettit, J. (2012) Empowerment and participation: bridging the gap between understanding and practice. *For the UNDESA expert group meeting on promoting people's empowerment in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and productive and decent work for all.* Sussex: Institute of Development Studies.

Petit, J. and Wheeler, J. (2005). Developing Rights? Relating Discourse to Context and Practice. *IDS Bulletin* 36(1): 1-8.

Piron, L.H. (2005). Rights-based Approaches and Bilateral Aid Agencies: More Than a Metaphor? *IDS Bulleting* 36(1): 19-30.

Pyburn, R., Hunter, C., Wennink, B., Hilhorst, T. and Zaal, F. (2010). *Strengthening Women's Livelihoods through Collective Action - A Literature Review*. Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute (KIT). Available at: http://womenscollectiveaction.com (accessed on 11 May 2012).

Rowlands, J. (1995). Empowerment examined. *Development in Practice* 5(2): 101-107.

Reimann, K. (2006). A View from the Top: International Politics, Norms and the Worldwide Growth of NGOs. *International Studies Quartily* 50: 45-67.

Ruchi Tripathi, R., Chung, Y.B., Deering, K., Saracini, N., Willoughby, R., Wills, O., Mikhail, M., Warburton, H., Jayasinghe, D., Rafanomezana, J. and Churm, M. (2012). *What Works for Women: Proven approaches for empowering women smallholders and achieving food security*. London: ActionAid International, CARE, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, Find Your Feet, Oxfam, Practical Action, Save the Children, Self Help Africa. Available at: http://www.actionaid.org (accessed on 22 February 2013).

Sen, A. (2000). Social Exclusion: Concept, Application, and Scrutiny. *Social Development Papers No. 1 For Office of Environment and Social Development*. Manila: Asian Development Bank. Available online at: http://housingforall.org (accessed on 13 May 2012).

Scoones, I. (2009). Livelihoods Perspectives and Rural Development. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(1): 171-196.

Tsikata, D. (2007) Announcing a new dawn prematurely? Human rights feminists and the rights-based approaches to development. In: Cornwall, A., Harrison, E. and Whitehead, A. (eds). *Feminisms in development: contradictions, contestations and challenges,* pp. 214-226. London: Zed Books. Available online at: http://m.friendfeed-media.com (accessed on 23 May 2013).

United Nations Country Team (2011) Ethiopia United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2012 to 2015. Available online at http://ethiopia.unfpa.org (accessed on 12 May 2013).

VeneKlasen, L., Miller, V., Clark, C. and Reilly, M. (2004). Rights-based approaches and beyond: challenges of linking rights and participation. *IDS Working Paper 235.*

Win, E. (2008). In search of new images: when feminism meets development. In: Mukhopadhyay, M. and Meer, S. (eds). *Gender, rights and development: a global sourcebook*, pp.101-111. Amsterdam: KIT publishers. Available online at .http://www.kit.nl (accessed on 13 May 2013).