Breaking the chains of bondage

A field study of empowerment projects in Namibia

by

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"I will break the chains to freedom
and I won’t turn back!
I’m Climbing to the very top
From below where my mother was for so long.
I’m stepping out of the shadows
Stretching, excited and glowing,
Because I know that I will
Reap what I am Sowing!"

(By Courtesy Fawena, in WAD Review 4th edition)
Abstract

This paper is a result of a field study in Namibia, which was made by us during a period of six weeks in February – March 2004. The study was financed by SIDA through a Minor Field Study (MFS) scholarship. We focus on two local projects; the projects are run by two different organisations, Pamwe Trust and Women’s action for development, in the Northern parts of Namibia for unemployed and low-educated men and women from areas with a high unemployment rate. The aim of this paper is to view positive examples of projects in Namibia that are contributing to marginalized people to get empowered. From an empowerment perspective and theory we analyze what possibilities the participants are given by the projects to get empowered, what effects being empowered can have on the individuals’ life situation, and how you can work in projects to make people empowered. Our starting point has been that the projects might give the project participants a possibility to increase their participation in civil society and open up for possibilities to self-support and a way out of marginalization. Our methods have been field studies and interviews of the two chosen projects. We have found that the chosen projects are contributing to empower the participants on three levels personal, interpersonal and community level. This conclusion is formed on the basis of that the participants feel that they have increased their self-confidence by participating, and have learned to co-operate and that they can reach goals together which they are not able to do by themselves, which in turn also affects the community as whole. Nevertheless we are questioning the fact that the participants seem to be dependent on the projects to be empowered. This is an empowerment paradox.

Keywords: Namibia, Empowerment project, Empowerment
Acknowledgements

We have been living with this paper since September 2003 when we applied for the Minor Field Studies Scholarship. There are many people who have helped us make this paper possible. Elsebeth Fog has been with us all along and really has taken her time to answer questions and give us feedback. We could not have had a better tutor. Thanks Elsebeth! There are many who has met us with enthusiasm and they have been given us support. Gittan Arwèn of Africa Groups of Sweden was our first contact with the project in Namibia. Thanks for your quick responds on our questions and for sending the message to people in Namibia about our interest of looking at their project. When we arrived in Namibia we met people who opened doors for us in our work. We have been invited to dinners, received presents and were invited to people’s home through the trip in Namibia. A big Thanks goes to Sussy Gideon, Fredrik Gangeses, Veronica de Klerk, Virginia Mayorga, Betty Rummukainen, Bengt Sundgren, Alexis Tobar and Olga Tjurutue for making our journey so pleasant. Back in Sweden we have been given support with things from lend computers to language matters. We send thanks to Tomas Andersson, Max Svenburg, Michael Grönroos, Katarina Prstojevic, Maria Lantz, Fredrik Wennerberg, Johanna Morsten, Andrej Rajastrand and Per Zackrisson.

Last but not least we thank ourselves. Through stress and laughter this paper is now finished. Thanks!
List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AGS</td>
<td>Africa Groups of Sweden</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>MBE</td>
<td>Ministry of Basic Education</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Agency</td>
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<td>SWAPO</td>
<td>South West African People Organisation</td>
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<td>WAD</td>
<td>Women’s Action for Development</td>
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Map of Namibia

1. Okakarara: Location for WAD’s training Centre
2. Windhoek, capital of Namibia. Location for Head Office of WAD and Pamwe Trust.
3. Oshakati: Location for Pamwe’s local office.
4. Otjiwarongo: Starting point for the project trip.
Travelogue

The captain of the airplane informed us that we soon would be landing. All we could see from the window were desert and long small lonely road. It looked peaceful. When we landed the hot weather struck us and we felt happy about leaving the Swedish winter behind. Our first destination was the capital of Namibia, Windhoek. The trip from the airport to our hostel took about an hour with taxi.

After checking in at our new home in Windhoek, the trip to find different projects started. The first project we contacted during the first week was located in Katatura. Parts of Katatura are the slum block of the Capital of Namibia. This was our first meeting with real poverty. People lived in metal sheds and tried to make a living by selling bread and meat by the road to by passers.

Empowerment felt very far-off and the possibility to self-fulfilment was distant. Later on when the opportunities came to talk to people in this neighbourhood, they showed us joy and pride. They all made jokes with each other and it felt like everyone belonged to on big family. We became well received by every one we met on our journey and seldom have we met such friendliness and helpfulness. Particularly taxi drivers that drove us across Windhoek’s streets were very friendly. Many times they left their cell phone number if we wanted to go travelling again, which made us feel secure since we had been warned about unreliable taxi drivers and a lot of other dangers. Taxi drivers in Namibia are often young black men who often had a friend in the car for company.

By the time we left for our next destination, the town Okakarara, we had adjusted enough to African time so that planning for the trip and staying were things that we had to deal during the journey. It was a traditional Namibian trip in a minivan. Those busses leave when they are full at any time and stop along the way wherever you wish. The standard of transport vehicles are far away from the Swedish standard and the trips were seldom a joyful journey.

When we arrived in Okakarara we found a nice place to stay for the night. On the following morning we discovered that there were no bus going to our destination. Instead we hitch a ride with a toothless guy with a big smile who offered us a ride to Okakarara, and also a ride back
to Windhoek. Like most Namibians he was all smiling and seem to love to talk about, and compare our country to his.

One our way back to Windhoek we decided to pass by the tourist attraction Waterberg plateau. The driver took us there and told us that he had been by the gate on several occasions but never had the opportunity to go inside because it was too expensive. We offered him to climb the mountain with us. He thanked us by taking charge of the climbing. Way up on the mountain, our view was the green, yet so dried Namibia. We sat down and caught the monument by admiring the view. After this adventure the taxi driver drove us to a small village where he seemed to know everyone. We got to a small private cottage to get something to drink, this we would never had found by our selves. The man in the house asked Martin shyly if he could offer him a coin. I did now that my valet was overfull. I only offer him coins and yet it was more than a month’s salary for him. In that moment I did not feel like a poor student.

A few nights afterwards we were invited to a barbecue in the wealthier parts of Windhoek. The houses were fenced and dogs were barking constantly. The different between rich and poor in Namibia are extreme. I think back of an interview, with Namibia’s only big sport star Frankie Fredricks, which was sent in the Namibian television. Fredricks was born and raised in Katatura. In the interview he celebrated his friends and mother. He felt that he wanted to give something back to his old neighbourhood Katatura. Therefore he has started a training school for young athletics in Katatura.

What we want to say by this is that the energy and ambitions that are in Namibia will surely spark more stars than Frankie Fredricks in the future.
Disposal

Chapter one Introduction consists of general facts and brief history of Namibia, the aim of the paper and questions of issue. The chapter also consists of a theoretical discussion about the impacts of poverty and social exclusion.

Chapter two consists of the theoretical background. We decided to name it Empowerment framework since we have adopted a holistic approach of empowerment and felt it necessary to introduce the concept in relationship to a wider context. In this chapter we define empowerment and the levels in which it occurs. As an attempt to make the understanding of empowerment clearer we present a model of the relationship between power and empowerment. To create an understanding of the context in which those we have been interviewed lives, we present a section named learned helplessness and social mobilization. In this chapter you also find results from previous research.

Chapter three, named Perspective and research measures are the methodology chapter. Here we introduce our perspective, used methods and course of action.

Chapter four Presentation of Women’s action for development and Pamwe consist of the presentation of the projects that we have been studied. This chapter consists of our empirical results and the most important results and emerged information from the interviews, and from the secondary sources we have used to find relevant information about the projects.

In chapter five Analysis and Discussion you find a deeper analyze of the projects put in relation to the theoretical framework and previous research. We have chosen to interwove analyze and discussion since we found it easier to introduce it in this way. To make it easier for the reader to follow our argumentation we have divided the chapter into three sections based on the three levels in which we can see that empowerment occurs in, empowerment on an individual level, empowerment on an interpersonal level and empowerment on a political and community level. These are to be seen as the base of the chapter. Furthermore this chapter contains an elucidation of gender, future of the projects, objections to the result and discussion of the paradox of empowerment.
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Appendix
1. Introduction

1.1 General facts and brief history of Namibia

Namibia is Africa’s youngest independent nation. When Africa was divided between European nations during colonisation it fell under German rule and was named South-West Africa.

After the First World War the country was under protection from the United Nations, but the real power was hold by South Africa who occupied the country. The situation in Namibia did get worse when the racist Nationalist Party won the election in South Africa in 1948\(^1\). The Nationalist Party made different laws between black\(^2\) and white people in South Africa, and now they also implemented in Namibia. Particularly it meant that all official buildings, buses, schools etc. were divided into separate departments for white and black. In 1966 the United Nation took action to liberate Namibia from South Africa, although nothing really happened until 1988 when South Africa at last agreed to start a process of independence\(^3\). The country became free of apartheid and gained independence in 1990 after a long struggle from SWAPO\(^4\) led by Sam Nujoma. Today the country has become a constitutional democracy with a multi-party system where SWAPO is ruling the country with Sam Nujoma as President. Today the country is politically stable in spite of its historical legacy.

Namibia is characterised by transformation from an undemocratic society in which the majority of the people were disempowered. The country has recently become independent and democratic country, and the challenge today is to turn democratic dreams and visions into reality. Namibia has a population of 1.7 million with more than 70 percent based in the rural area where the income is lowest due to relatively little economic development. 90 percent of the population in the northern regions are black. The percentages of unemployed are 40.4 percent for women and 28.6 percent for men.\(^5\) It is also estimated that about half of the employed population is under-employed. Therefore the combined rate of employment and under employment is more than 60 percent. In the northern areas the combined rate is 10

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\(^1\) Afrika Grupperna, 2002.
\(^2\) In Namibia the term back is generally used when referring to the black population. The term coloured were under the apartheid era used when referring to mixed people.
\(^3\) Afrika grupperna, 2002.
\(^4\) South West Africa Peoples Organisation.
percent higher than in the rest of the country. Today, 14 years after gaining independence, poverty is still widely spread and the economical differences extremely large. The differences in income between the white minority (approximately 5 percent) and the black majority are considerable. The differences in income between different geographic areas are also strikingly large. In spite of Namibia’s relative wealth, thanks to diamonds and a well-developed fish industry, the government is not able to fight the poverty only by radical redistributive politics. Particularly the northern parts of the country are still suffering from the redistribution of the occupation, which have resulted in that “the African areas” consist of overpopulated reserves, where the inhabitants live in the utmost poverty and usually without any hope of employment. In the northern parts the educational system is very poorly developed and the rate of illiteracy is high. However the government’s ambitions so far have mainly aimed at improving the social service. The historical inheritance – apartheid – left a dualistic society and an economy, which still shows many unchanged characteristics. The white minority mainly controls the private sector. The black majority’s absence of education possibilities and trade and industry experiences, especially in the northern parts, has resulted in a situation with very few black entrepreneurs, although the number has increased during recent years. A rapport by the government describes the situation in the country in the following way: At independence in 1990 Namibia inherited a colonial socio-economic structure with the following characteristics:

- An underdeveloped economy with a small modern sector.
- Low levels of education and skills among the majority black population.
- Racial inequity in the distribution of employment opportunities, income wealth and social service.

Today Namibia is still suffering from apartheid and has large differences in prosperity among the people. The high levels of unemployment and underemployment create class, racial, regional and social tensions. ⁶ Certain groups are more exposed, like women and the youth.

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1.2 Poverty and social exclusion

Namibia is in urgent need for a better utilisation of resources, balanced economic development and upgrading of skills. The country is a young nation, struggling with a legacy of many forms of oppression. It is important that all citizens’ benefit from the development and empowerment that the nation is determined to chart. However this must include a gender struggle, since women are lagging behind and their voices are hardly heard in the major decision making areas. Black women have been severely disadvantaged by policies of the past. Women in rural areas have been especially disadvantaged. They are isolated and have limited access to social and economic opportunities to improve their lives. Illiteracy, poverty and male attitudes are major obstacles to women’s advancement. The majority of women are employed in the informal sector where wages are generally lower and there are no social benefits. Arnold Tjihuiko, the Deputy Director for Small and Informal Industries in the Ministry of Trade and Industry stated, “Although women constituted nearly 60 percent of the population, their participation in the informal sector registered a dismal 30 percent. We have therefore decided, by looking at it from a social and historical perspective, to build incentives for women that embodies special training and a totally non-discriminatory approach”. One fact that still effect women negatively when it comes to business is when dealing with commercial banks. In theory, no discrimination against women by commercial banks are allowed and all costumers are supposed to be treated equally, still women tend to have more difficulty acquiring loans. The women’s situation is given great attention by the government and different private organisations. The government has for instance adopted a law on women’s economical equality and independence. Nevertheless women are traditionally and culturally far from equal to men in practice. Women are poorer than men and less represented in politics and business. In 1997 the Department for Women’s Affair and Child Welfare founded a “National Gender Policy”. The policy states: “empowerment of women is seen as a prerequisite for achieving conductive and sustainable political, social, cultural and economical security among all people in Namibia. Empowering women does not mean reversing existing power hierarchies, but rather to empower women and/or women’s groups to make their own choices, to speak out on their own behalf, to control their own lives and to help change society towards more egalitarian relations of class, race and ethnicity. Political mobilisation of

7 Wieringa & Mogotsi, 2002.
9 Wiringa & Mogotski, 2002.
women and rising awareness are important elements of the empowerment approach, and women’s organisations are seen as vital actors in development processes.10

Namibia is still characterised by socio-economic dualism inherited from the colonial system. There are in effect no links between rural and urban economy. The labour force is largely low skilled, unemployed and underemployed. Poverty and unemployment are among the burning social problems in Namibia. According to Henning Melber11, attempts to reduce poverty and unemployment remain urgent challenges in the efforts towards more equality. Namibia is one of the world’s most unequal societies. The distribution of income among the Namibian population reveals that the richest 10 percent of the society receives 65 percent of the income. This means that nine out of every 10 people have to be satisfied with sharing one third of the cake. Unemployment as a direct contributing factor to poverty has indeed become one of the most burning social issues. 40 percent of the population is below the poverty line. Poverty is a result of inequality; when inequality is greatest, poverty is likely to be great. Chambers12 maintains that poverty is a circumstance where people find they are deprived and are rendered powerless by social change. Furthermore he holds that issues of poverty also touch on broader ones of social structure and are linked to class domination. Poverty can not be seen entirely as a matter of subjective factors, as the social structures in which the poor are embedded plays a crucial role. Poverty is related to the concept social exclusion. Social exclusion refers to the idea of failure to fully take part in society’s affairs resulting from the lack of capabilities and entitlements, and not simply to material possessions. Social exclusion can be defined as “the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live”.13 In the Namibian context exclusion from labour is a confinement. To have a job is crucial for the individual’s position in the economy of African countries. Poorly, unskilled labour is likely to associate individuals with poverty and deprivation. According to Mufane14 the importance of paid employment to escape social exclusion and poverty cannot be overestimated, since employment also effects a person’s social status and his or hers personal dignity.

10 A.a.
12 In Mufune, 2002.
14 2002.
Brian Davey\textsuperscript{15} claims that people who are seriously disadvantaged in society rarely have single problems—they have multiple interlocking problems. They suffer from a “cycle of deprivation”. Empowerment must address all their problems together if it is to be meaningful. Furthermore he means that poverty, poor housing and the nature of social security system put a strain on relationships and lead to widespread demoralisation. Depending on the circumstances of individuals they can lead to physically and mentally poor health, criminality or addiction. Powerlessness has economic, environmental, social, interpersonal, health, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Powerless people live in limited physical surroundings; they are spatially and socially separated from the people and places who decide about their destiny, they are not “well connected”, they have lower purchasing power as consumers, no purchasing power for entrepreneurial and investment roles and they are often emotionally and cognitively crippled by powerlessness—either not motivated to try to pull themselves out of the problems or driven by frustration to destructive or self-destructive behaviour.\textsuperscript{16} To find a way out of these problems and to improve social, economic and environmental conditions a catalysing process and a support system are necessary. These must not take over but to support an empowerment process that becomes more and more self-sufficient. A strategy out of the situation is mobilising local unemployed labour and resources to meet local needs as identified by local and poor people. It is needed to develop knowledge and abilities for the people to make them able to do their own social, economic and environmental projects and mutual aid. Community psychologists have found that it helps to bring people together to identify what problem they share, and than try to find collective solutions. To end isolation and building self-confidence, by empowering people, is essential to their psychological wellbeing.\textsuperscript{17}

On the basis from this discussion we saw a need for knowledge about empowerment strategies in developing countries. We wanted to study how projects can act like a catalyzing process and how they can support empowerment processes among marginalized individuals or groups in Namibia. We have chosen to study two projects in Namibia that brings people together and that aims to develop peoples knowledge and abilities.
1.3 Aim and question of issue

The aim of this paper is to elucidate good examples of how you can work on a grass root level in projects to empower marginalized individuals and groups in developing countries. We want to study applied empowerment strategies in Namibia. To fulfil this aim we discuss the concept of empowerment in relation to two chosen projects, Women’s action for development and Pamwe. The projects are directed to unemployed people from rural areas. Through motivation and training the projects aims to develop skills and income-generating activities for the participants. From an empowerment perspective we intend to analyze how the two chosen projects can contribute to empower people. We have been working on the basis of the following questions of issue in attempting to fulfill our aim:

- How can you work in social projects among marginalized individuals and parts of the population in Namibia?
- What possibilities are provided by the Pamwe and Women’s action for development projects to empower the participants?
- How does being empowered affect the individual’s situation?
2. Empowerment framework

2.1 Introduction

Our aim is to study applied empowerment strategies in Namibia. To fulfil this aim we start by introduce a theoretical discussion of the concept empowerment. In the later chapter Analysis and discussion we will put the theoretical discussion in relation to the two chosen projects, attempting to make an understanding of how they can contribute to empowering marginalized individuals and groups.

We have adopted a holistic approach of empowerment. The holistic approach sees the relationship between the individual’s problems and the social, political and economic context in which the person lives. It means that the agents who work towards empowerment have to take account of the various systems in which the individual interacts. Empowerment is directed both at personal and social transformation. And therefore, as we see it, it is almost impossible to view the individual empowerment without discussing the concepts of social development and community development, in which empowerment is an important strategy, since they are interconnected. The processes of empowerment are taking place on three levels: individual, group and societal. A holistic approach as we see it is ideal in the Namibian context. According to Bernstein & Gray the social development approach is becoming increasingly important in those contexts where there is a high level of poverty in society. To help people effectively in social work you have to be aware of the broader system which may have an influence on the system in which the people you are addressing interacts. You have to know the communities in which people live, the needs, the major problems, available resources and also the cultural practice. It is important to be aware of the fact that the meaning of empowerment is dependent on the context in which it occurs. According to Rein and White the starting point for empowerment work has to be the social and cultural context of the participants:

The knowledge that social work seeks cannot be made in universities by individuals who presumptively seek timeless, contextless truths about human
nature, societies, institutions, and policy. The knowledge must be developed in the living situations that are confronted by the contemporary episodes in the field.²⁰

The origins of the concept empowerment goes back to the civil rights movement in the USA in the 1960’s. It has since then been interpreted differently and filled with new meanings and is today used in different sectors. Mostly the concept is used in contexts of social development and social justice and has been stated as central to development in recent UN conferences. Social development is regarded as a process of planned social change designed to promote the well being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development²¹. According to Payne²² social development aims to affect wider groups such as communities or societies and the social relations which take place in those societies. Self-help organisations can be important mechanisms for social development through the generating of increased interpersonal skills. Empowerment has gained importance as an approach in social development. Social development embraces social policies and programmes which link “social welfare directly to economic policies and programmes”.²³ The state must be involved in the social development process, and it is the state’s responsibility to encourage economic growth.

Within the social development perspective community development is regarded as a social work model or an intervention strategy²⁴. Community development was defined in 1955 by the United Nations as a process to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with active participation and the fullest possible reliance on the communities’ initiative²⁵. Community development has the same goal as social development but takes place at the local level. Community development is required to develop people’s capacities to organize and to be prepared to meet the demand of a changing environment. This approach has self-help at its centre; the aim is to develop self-reliance among the participants so that poverty will be reduced. Community development is used to work towards the realisation of social development. Bernstein & Gray means that community development is relevant social work in the African context, and needs to be practiced. It is a model that is

²² 2002.
²³ Bernstein & Gray, 1997.
²⁴ A.a.
²⁵ Johnsson, 1982.
appropriate to the African context since it is an approach that emphasises change through advocacy and empowerment of people. In this context, the empowerment discourse acknowledges global and national structures working to people’s disadvantage and links individual empowerment to the location of individuals in wider power structures. This paper is based on personal interviews with participants in local projects and interviews with people who work in the organisations. We illuminate empowerment from an individual, group and community level, not from the social development level, which requires state interference. It would have been interesting to discuss the relationship between voluntary initiatives versus the role and responsibility of the government, but we find the issue too far reaching for this essay, and cannot see that it would serve the aim of the essay.

### 2.2 What is empowerment?

Empowerment literally means, “becoming powerful” but in social work it has come to mean much more than that. The *Dictionary of social work* defines empowerment as ‘theory concerned with how people may gain collective control over their lives, so as to achieve their interests as a group, and a method by which social workers seek to enhance the power of people who lack it.’ Empowerment can be defined as when individuals, groups and/or communities become able to take control over their own circumstances and achieve their own goals, thereby being able to work towards helping themselves and others to maximise the quality of their lives. According to Payne there are different empowering principles, one of them is that all people have skills, understanding and ability and we must recognise these. Empowerment work aims to increase peoples control over their lives, for example, through the changing of society’s structure, or render possibilities for the individual to develop self-trust. According to Payne the workers role, which is most effective in empowerment, is:

- as resource consultants linking people to resources in ways which improve their self-esteem and problem-solving abilities
- sensitising help people gain self-knowledge
- teaching/training offers processes and skills enabling people to complete specific tasks

Different definitions of empowerment range between defining it as a largely individual

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27 Adams, 1996.
process of taking control of and responsibility for one’s life and situation, and defining it as a political process of granting human rights and social justice to disadvantaged groups of people. Gutirrez & Ortega\(^{29}\) have distinguished three levels of empowerment:

- Personal empowerment, which encourages the development of feelings of personal autonomy and self-efficacy,
- Interpersonal empowerment which comprises the dynamics of relationships between individuals and,
- Political empowerment, which incorporate collective social action for the achievement of freedom for oppression.

The different levels are seen as interconnected and mutually reinforcing, e.g. when empowerment on individual level occurs, this will have effect on the group and societal level. People who are empowered on an individual level will most likely go on and affect the other levels. Empowerment on a group level, e.g. people organizing around a particular need, is likely to have effect on the individual empowerment of the people in the form of increased self-esteem and sense of agency.\(^{30}\)

### 2.3 Empowerment on a personal level

Empowerment has as purpose to help people to gain power over decisions and actions, which affect their life. These can be achieved by decreasing the consequences of social or personal obstacles, by increasing self-confidence and individual ability to use the power and move over the power from the surrounding to the individual.\(^{31}\) According to Kvinnoforum (Women’s forum)\(^{32}\) empowerment cannot be given to someone by somebody else, the process has to start from within and be owned and driven by the person herself. Outside agents or projects can only facilitate and encourage these processes. You can see empowerment as a process that who comes from below the civil society and from within the individual. These processes cannot be created by anyone else but the individual itself. But as we have pointed out before organisations can work as necessary support system to start the empowerment process.

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29 In Sedat, 1991.
Rowlands\textsuperscript{33} has made an analysis of the effects NGO\textsuperscript{34} and local projects in Honduras have to get people empowered. She means that empowerment involves different aspects that can be categorized in three groups: material, structural and inner. The processes exist in your personal life, in relations and within groups. Within each of these areas different values are to be identified and that is the essence of the process. Those values should be limited through obstructing factors in the cultural, physical and economic environment and be made possible through supporting/encouraging factors related to participating in NGOs/the projects activities.

The first identified core values in the personal experiences are self-confidence, self-respect, ability of action, and the sense of a “me” in a wider context and pride. Second the experiences in relations which can be identified as the core values, ability to negotiate, ability to communicate, ability to get support, a sense of a “me” in relations, the ability to defend ones me and pride. The third set of core values in collective empowerment is group identity, feeling collective actions and group pride. Rowlands research shows that inner aspects are the most important and it is were the biggest changes could be found.

To make empowerment easier to understand it is important to take a step further into the debate about power. The term empowerment implies that someone without power receives power.\textsuperscript{35} When power has been discussed in connection to empowerment, four overarching ways to easily categorize how power works have been formulated. This model of power in relation to empowerment is frequently used. Oxaal\textsuperscript{36} divides the categories in the following way:

**Power over:** is the conventional view of power where certain groups take advantage on the expense of others and involves a relation where an individual or a group is dominant and the other subordinated. Power in this sense is often described as a zero-sum game, power is limited and in order to let someone gain power others have to lose power.

\textsuperscript{33} 1997.
\textsuperscript{34} Non-governmental organisation is organisations organised by groups of people in the sphere of the civil society, working for a cause for the benefit of society, which often contribute as well to the development of democracy.
\textsuperscript{35} Kvinnoforum, 2001.
\textsuperscript{36} Oxaal, 1997.
Power to: is a different conventional view that refers to power as enable possibilities in the context of problem solving and creativity. This view involves a decision-making authority and can be translated into access of decision-making structures. Power to also involves having influence on defining rules and norms in society.

Power with: means that people organize for a common purpose with an understanding of collective goals. When people come together for a specific collective purpose and realize that the power they share are larger than the sum of their individual powers.

Power Within: Refers to the individuals feelings of him/herself, his/hers self-esteem and self-confidence. It refers to the internal dimension of the ability to influence ones own life, a sense of agency. That means to have self-confidence and knowledge about your self. This view involves the possibility of every individual making his or her own choices. To look at power within as something that is inside is an important starting-point in empowerment. To use this perspective of power in the work with individuals contributes to increase their self-esteem, knowledge rising and self-confidence.

The tree latter categories of power (to, with, within) are linked to empowerment. They must be seen as reinforcing each other and empowerment can be seen as the increase of any, or all, of these dimensions of power.\(^{37}\) According to Kabeer\(^ {38}\) empowerment has tree dimensions, resources, action and performance. He means that you most have got resources to get action and from there you get your performance. Furthermore Kabeer states that when individuals have power within you can take action because you know that you have opportunities to choose. The ability to make choices is the main problem in an empowerment process where the main purpose is change. Coleride\(^ {39}\) has defined differences between a person who is empowered and disempowered. A person who is disempowered has low self-esteem, does seldom make their own decisions, has low or no knowledge about his rights and do not feel powerful to make changes in his situation. An individual who is empowered has good self-esteem, makes his own decisions, has knowledge about his rights and has a feeling of having the power to make changes in ones life. According to Payne\(^ {40}\) being empowered means having the ability to take charge of matters that effects us, equipping people with personal


\(^{38}\) 1999

\(^{39}\) 1995.

\(^{40}\) 2002.
resources to take power, by developing their confidence, self-esteem, assertiveness, expectations and knowledge and skills. This can be compared with Kabeers view of power within.

### 2.4. Learned helplessness and social mobilization

Social mobilization is the core in community development. It means working together with people, groups of people and organisations in the community. Mobilization work aims to motivate and help people to organize themselves and through that, develop and take care of the human power as a collective in creative surroundings. Empowerment and social mobilization are two concepts that are mutual dependent on each other. Social mobilization strives against creating a democratic society where each person is given possibilities to influence their life conditions. In other words, increase their power. According to Midgley social mobilization aims to promote peoples wellbeing through carrying out social changes in a way that they can solve problems, fulfill needs and promote possibilities for changes. The view on whether social mobilization must derive from the grassroots themselves varies between different researchers. Brian Davey means that it is an illusion to think that people who live in a complex situation characterized by poverty and social exclusion have the capacity to start up self-help initiatives by themselves. According to him some catalysing processes and support system are needed.

People in Namibia have for many years lived under an apartheid regime, where they never have been given the opportunity to use their power. If people experience that what they do does not affect what happens to them they will create expectations that their actions will not lead to something good, their ability to learn a functional behaviour in other situations are deteriorated. They drop motivation, become less able to think and to learn. People who have lacked power their whole life strike learned helplessness. Learned helplessness means that you live with a deeply rooted feeling that noting you do matters. The feeling of having control over situations is missing, learned helplessness is definitely a barrier to strive forward and upwards. On the basis of that, we mean that social mobilization from one owns initiative is hard to bring out among the individuals and groups that we have been studying, they have

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41 Sundh & Turunen, 1992.
43 Payne, 2002.
often lived in poverty without real opportunities to self-fulfillment. At the starting point the projects was established by international organizations, however both of the organizations did have an explicit aim for the projects to be self-sustainable already from the beginning. The projects can in accordance with Daveys view on social mobilizations be seen as the catalyzing processes and support systems that are necessary. Barber\textsuperscript{44} means that a way out of learned helplessness can be to give people experience of situations that they can control and bring out results that are important for them.

2.5 What is a project?

Project is the Latin word for throw out or I throw and it comes from the same word-stem as projectile. What projects have in common are that they act in a delimited field, in other words, it has a beginning, a process and an ending. All projects have a goal. This means that every project in one-way or another is variable. In the concept of the project itself is also the human behaviour and therefore a project cannot be foreseen to one hundred percent.

Regardless of what time perspective a project exists in, it always means a form of change. Without expectations of changes for those who participate in the projects, no new projects can be started, and it is those expectations that are supposed to be the fundament of the final definition. Once the projects are finished they must have given the result that was the expectations that was there from the start\textsuperscript{45}.

A genuine project is something where the action is the most important issue and the goal only the beginning. People must be given structure to create meaningful life project through project. All individuals have a deep need of fulfilment, regardless historical and material condition. In common for the successful projects should be that the involved people manages to keep the movement alive.\textsuperscript{46} Later we will return to the concepts of empowerment and project to discuss the relation between them and how we define an empowerment project.

\textsuperscript{44} 1986 in Payne, 2002.
\textsuperscript{45} Lööw, 2003.
\textsuperscript{46} Bjerkman, 1984.
2.6. Previous research

When we went to Namibia, we wanted to do our research from an open-minded approach where we could draw our own conclusions about what it means to be empowered in the Namibian context, especially since we find empowerment dependent on the context in which it occurs. Therefore we did not search for previous research before we did our interviews. Still though, we had knowledge of empowerment from our education, but we did not have knowledge about applied empowerment strategies in the Namibian context. After we had done our interviews and returned back to Sweden we searched for literature that could help us work up our findings and verify it. The research that best could verify our conclusions of what it means to be empowered is a report from 2001 made by Kvinnoforum (Women’s forum). The name of the report is *Measuring women’s empowerment*, and the next section is based on it.

Based on several studies in for instance Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia, Kvinnoforum, state that concepts of power within and power with are applicable in the measurement of empowerment. There are common elements of empowerment on an individual level that were identified by the respondents in the studies, like, assertiveness, confidence, self-esteem, self-respect, financial independence, certain level of education, decision-making, control of recourses and information. From the Namibian study, where a measurement of empowerment was made on Namibian National Association of Women in Business, the following indicators of empowerment was found; having income, being employed as well as having known skills and personal up-liftment and confidence. When the women were asked to list important things in her life they responded, education, knowledge, employment, control over resources, knowledge of marketing, knowledge of business, family well-being and financial well-being. Personal indicators of empowerment that was found in the Zimbabwean study on the organisation Rural Association for progress was self-respect, self-confidence, good-interpersonal skills, ability to take decisions, financial well-being, being hardworking, self-reliance and being knowledgeably. Possible indicators of social empowerment which were found in the Namibian study was: change in the individuals attitudes, skills and work with others, change in role relations, new opportunities, ability to work together as a group, influence on system cases poverty.

47 Based on the participants experience.
A conclusion of the study was that for real empowerment to occur there has to be a change in people themselves. The process of empowerment includes changes in attitudes, skills and knowledge of individuals as well as in social relations, when these changes occur other can follow in health, education, employment etc. Another conclusion that was drawn from the study was that there are certain threats to empowerment; i.e. ignorance about resources and their availability, laziness, lack of unity, jealousy, and self-centredness resulting in self-serving interest.

Anna Fogelmarck\(^\text{48}\) has made a study to determine what effect the membership in voluntary organisations has on the political culture in a new democracy in a developing country. The study is made in Namibia. Her conclusion is that membership in voluntary organisation is an important factor for the development of the political culture in Namibia, alongside with other factors, for instance education and income. She also emphasise that democratization is a process and that it takes time for a democratic system to be established. For a democracy to be consolidated it is important that people understand what their rights as well as duties are in the new system, and that the civil society becomes strong which is much up to the Namibians themselves. The initiatives must come from below, but when they do the international community has an important role to play to supporting these.

\(^{48}\) 2000.
3. Perspective and research measures

Our perspective has been phenomenological. When you try to understand other people it is important to work from a perspective that gives you the opportunity to really understand peoples own experience. The phenomenologist views human behaviour, what people say and do as a product of how people define their world, and they seeks understanding through qualitative methods such as participant observation, interviews and fieldwork. Whereby they try to understand people from their own frame of reference. 49 The benefits by using qualitative methods are that you are able to observe people in their lives, to listen to them and talk about what are on their minds. Central to the phenomenological perspective is an understanding for the people, in our case the project participants who were in the project.

Methodically this essay is a case study where we examine two chosen projects. According to Yin a case study is an empirical research that examine a contemporary phenomenon in it’s naturally context. Yin means that it is suitable to do a case study when you ought to answer a ”how” or ”why” questions and when you want to examine processes, i.e. how something advance or develop. 50 Case studies, according to Yin, are often criticized because of the small possibilities to generalize the results from it. The aim with a case study however are not to generalize the result to an bigger population, case studies generalize in condition to theoretical assumptions. 51 A prerequisite for a case study to be applied on other cases is that the chosen case is typical. 52 Due to the fact that we only examine two projects we cannot prove that our specific objects can be seen as representative, therefore cannot our result be seen as generable.

3.1 Course of action

The knowledge that underlie our results have we gain through books, articles, written information from the chosen projects, one external evaluation of Pamwe, reports, discussions and interviews, but above all our field study, that has given us a unique possibility to create a deeper understanding of how it is to live in Namibia, and what significance it have for the individuals life situation to be participating in a income generating project.

50 Yin, 1994.
51 A.a.
52 Denscombe, M. 2000.
To see a pattern on how a project work in Namibia we found it necessary to look at more than one project. We used the snowball effect as a method to find suitable projects. The snowball effect means that you are introduced to a person or organization that brings you to go further and meet more people through his contacts. The first person you meet in the snowball effect is called for a gatekeeper and is the one who gives you the permission to collect material for your study. This method has many benefits when you are in a new surrounding and do not know what you are going to encounter. Another benefit for us was that we only had 6 weeks in the country, which was a short time for connecting with people in another way than just through the snowball effect. A problem with this method can be that you only get in contact with projects that the gatekeepers want you to see. We were aware of this but since our purpose was to look at successful projects, we did not find it as a problem. The snowball effect is often underestimated since it brings you situations that never should happen in a structured study.

We did a project inventory trip where we visited ten different projects to get a picture of how you can work among marginalized groups of the population. On the basis of the inventory we selected two projects that we found interesting to do further research on. Repstad holds that when you choose to study several projects you can be more certain to draw valid conclusions. The projects we chose are Pamwe and Women’s action for development. Pamwe is a school building project and aims to involve the local community in the process of building new schools, to train members of the community in basic building skills and to create income-generating activities for members of the rural communities. Women’s action for development (WAD) is a Namibian NGO. The aim of the organisation is to empower women. They introduce themselves as a Self-Help Organisation that aims at uplifting the socio-economic and social-political situation of women. They do so by, for instance, supporting the members to start income-generating projects and by offering skill training projects. We choose these projects from a comprehension from our side that they could contribute to empower the project participants. Several gatekeepers had mediated the knowledge about the projects in this stage, Bengt Sundgren, who works as AGS’s stab chief in Windhoek, Fredrik Gangeses, project manager for Pamwe, Sussy Gideon whom we met at a Women’s centre in Katatura and was the one who organized our project inventory trip, Olga Tjurutue who had informed us about WAD’s work at the training centre in Okakarara. When we contacted the

\[53\] 1999.
projects and they were willing to contribute with the information, knowledge and time that we needed to accomplish this essay. We held introduction interviews with Bengt Sundgren, Fredrik Gangeses and Olga Tjurutue, the aim with those interviews were to get general information about the projects and to get in contact with the project participants.

### 3.2 Interviews

The interviews that we made to about WAD were one individual interview with WAD’s executive director Veronica de Klerk, this interview was hold at WAD’s head office in Windhoek and this was the only interview that was hold outside WAD’s local training centre in Okakarara.

The interviews made at the training centre were; two interviews with WAD’s local project coordinator in Okakarara Olga Tjurutue. The first interview aimed to get general information about the training centre and the projects. The second one wad made to verify the emerged information we gained throughout our work. We also did one group interview with 11 women, our idea with the group interview was to only interview the project trainers, but when other women from WAD’s income generating projects joined us around the table we did not see any problem in that. The benefits with group interview in qualitative studies are that it brings a description of social, cultural, and historical aspects.54 To create a deeper image we also did 14 individual interviews with participants from WAD’s computer- and cooking skill-training projects.

To find information about Pamwe we made one interview with the local project manager in Oshakati, Fredrik Gangeses, three individual interviews with ex. trainees from the project, all of them are today working as supervisors in the project. All these interviews were hold at the local office in Oshakati. Two interviews were hold with two former building advisers, Alexis Tobar and Virginia Mayorga. Alexis and Virginia were interviewed together. The reasons why we did two interviews with Alexis and Virginia was that we wanted do an ending interview with them because they were the ones having most knowledge of the project since they have been involved in it since 1994. The benefit with an ending interview is that you can submit all impressions and make sure that you have understood the issue is right.55

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54 Kvale, 1996.
3.3 Selection

The selection of informants’ distinguished between the two projects. Common for the selection is that we did interviews with the responsible ones at the projects. In Pamwe the informants were chosen by the project manager, this selection was based on the informants’ possibilities to attend at the interviews. Many of them live far from the office where the interviews were held and did not have the possibility to get there at the time for the interviews. In the case of WAD we chose to interview all the participants in the cooking and computer training that was participating the day for the interviews. In the group interview every trainer and woman from the income generating projects were invited and welcome to attend.

3.4 Interviews with participants

In the interview with the project participants we did use the same basic questions to everyone. The questionnaire forms are attached as appendix at the back of the essay. We chose to use semi-structured interviews. Nevertheless, we were prepared to be flexible concerning the question sequences and we also let the informants develop their answers and talk more detailed around the questions. With that, the emphasis lies on the informants that become more able to develop their point of view. The benefit with the interview method was that we became informed about the informants insights and knowledge about their situation. They were also able to prior what was important for them and they were allowed to view their opinions and ideas. The disadvantaged that can come from such open interviews are that the interviewer can affect the participants; the answers can be influenced of the interviewers identity. And inversely, the interviewer can interpret the answers from a subjective point of view. It is not possible to do these kind of interviews from an objective point of view, but we tried to be as open minded as possible. We were aware of the fact that we as white student had a far more advantageous position than the informants, which can have affected their answers, though we had to trust what they said to be true.

The aim with the interviews was to illuminate what impact the projects have had on the informants’ lives. We wanted to know if they ware employed before the project and what they have gain from being a participant. We concluded every interview by asking the informants if
they knew what empowerment means, no one did. To be able to continue the interview we had to explain what the concept empowerment means by saying that it is when you have the power to make changes in your life. 56 We were aware of the fact this explanation could be leading but in qualitative research it can be a benefit as long as it gain the aim of the study. As long as leading questions are used with a purpose, as in this case to clarify the change the participants experienced we consider it to be legitimate. In the interviews with people in charge of the project it has not been a problem to use the term empowerment, as it was familiar for them. Often we had long discussions about empowerment and the meaning of the concept. Our ambition has been to have a good atmosphere around the interviews, where it was all right to float around the subject. Hopefully it has given us a deeper understanding of their life situation.

We have learned a lot by making interviews in a different country where we were not familiar with the culture. Often we got the feeling that it seems hard for those we interviewed to talk about their feelings. Sometimes they had a big smile on their faces and we expected long answers but often they were very short and concise. The older ones did often feel more frightened to talk to us and it was a strange feeling for us to arouse. It might come from that they remember times during the apartheid when white scientists were spying for South Africa. Still the majority of the interviews were positive and people were really taking time for us, even if the planning for our visit often was very short. At one occasion when we did the interviews with participants in WAD’s computer training class we noticed that they became disappointed when we wanted to stop after 8 interviews so we decided to interview the rest of the group as well. It is important for the results that the scientist has respect for the one he interviews and creates an open and positive climate, if not your questions will not do good how good they ever are. If there is no interest paid to the questions or observation from the participants the outcome of the study will be badly infected. 57

56 By definition av Simmons & Parson, 1983.
57 Repstad, 1999.
3.5 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are two important concepts to determine if a research handle and consider what it aims to in a trustworthy way. Validity refers to whether the research measures what it aims to measure.\textsuperscript{58} A research validity is concerned to what grade the result is correspondent with reality. It is the researchers obligation to present an honest reproduction of how the informants view their self and their experience.\textsuperscript{59} To strengthen the validity of our study we have contentiously in the text used quotations from the informants. We have also used written sources from the projects that we consider important and that strengthen our validity. When validity is dependent of what that is measured reliability is dependent on how it is measured. As a qualitative research not can be reproduced, means that is hard to gain a high reliability.\textsuperscript{60} Though we have tried to strengthen our reliability by elucidate our theoretical perspective, approach and used methods.

3.6 Information work up

Every interview was recorded but as we chose to do open interviews of discussion character our interview material became very extensive, therefore we decided not to transcribe all of it. We listened to the tapes several times and only transcribed those parts of the interviews that we felt important for the aim of the study.

3.7 Application of sources

The interviews with Bengt Sundgren, Fredrik Gangeses and the first interview with Olga Tjurutue are not used in the text, this information was used to make an understanding of how the projects function. The written sources have been used to make a more essential presentation of the projects than what would have been possible only from using the interviews. The written sources have mainly been used to illuminate how you can work in empowerment projects. The interview information has mainly been used to view how the projects contribute for the participants to be empowered and how this affects the individuals’

\textsuperscript{58} Phillips, S. 1998.
\textsuperscript{59} Merriam, 1994.
\textsuperscript{60} Ejvegård, 1996.
life situation. We consider the interviews to be the most important information for our result and the written sources can be seen as complementary information.

3.8 Work division

Both of us have been active in collecting material for this essay but we saw benefits in dividing the head responsibility. With the knowledge of that men are culturally more privileged then women in Namibia, it felt like a good idea that Anna was responsible for WAD and Martin for Pamwe. During the interview sessions the responsible one made the interviews and the other was recording. During the interview with WAD we noticed that the women became more relaxed when Martin was making coffee and played with the children and not acted like a patriarchal male. It brought about a good atmosphere. We have also been writing and worked up the material separately. In advantaged with this work division is that we have been able to give reflections on each other’s work. Hopefully this has given us the opportunity to perform a better analysis and discussion. We have continuous been working with internal deadlines, kept contact through phone calls and email to make sure that we were in agreement and updated. We have been using two different ways to introduce the projects. Martin has been focused more on Pamwe as a project and Anna has focused on WAD, both the organization and their projects.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

In the beginning of every interview we informed the participants about the aim of the paper. When we used a tape recorder we always asked for the permission to use one. On one occasion we felt that the one we interviewed became nervous because of the tape recorder and we decided not to use it. We promised the participants not to use their name or age in the paper to make them feel more comfortable during the interviews. It is necessary to guarantee the confidentiality and privacy of the people you study. It was particularly important to the people we interviewed because the organization is so important in their lives.\textsuperscript{61} Since we have only studied projects and since the above-mentioned

\textsuperscript{61} Taylor, 1984.
participants are independent we do not believe this will affect credibility of this paper. At several occasions we noticed that our paper did create big expectations and we tried to make clear what the aim of the paper was and that we only were students. We were asked if we could start a marketplace in one community to give an example of the expectations we met.
4. Presentation of Women’s action for development and Pamwe

4.1 Introduction to WAD

Women’s action for development (WAD) is a Namibian NGO. The aim of the organisation is to empower women. They introduce themselves as a Self-Help Organisation that aims at uplifting the socio-economic and social-political situation of women. The organisation was established in 1994. It started as a project managed under the German Konrad-Adenauer stiftung today they are a fully Namibian NGO. The Konrad-Adenauer is still today the core donor, but WAD also receives donations from other international and local donors. According to Veronica de Klerk, executive director for WAD, the project established by the Konrad–Ardenauer stiftung because they saw the need for a women’s programme. Our contact with WAD has gone through the training centre in Okakarara but also through the head office in Windhoek. Okakarara training centre is located about 70 km from Otjiwarongo. The training centre has approximately 700 members and 10 projects, 8 outdoors income-generating projects and 2 inside projects, a cooking- and a computer class. Most of the members in the training centre are unemployed women and men, mostly women and teenagers who have dropped out from school. When WAD becomes active in a region, it works through decision-makers, traditional authorities, churches, school, education and health authorities etc. to reach community members.

Since WAD transformed from a project under the Konrad-Adenauer stiftung it has its own board of directors, consisting of twelve members. The members serve on the board voluntarily. The board is under management of the executive director, Veronica De Klerk. WAD has established a network of training centres in 6 northern regions of the country (Omusati, Otjozondjupa, Omaheke, Hardap, Erongo and Kunene). The WAD staff consists of a managing director and 4 supporting staff members located in the head office in Windhoek, 4 regional coordinators and 10 field officers. Today the training centres are located in the northern part of the country. The aim is to expand and open training centres in the southern part of the country as well. “If we had the money to expand we had already been there” says

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62 WAD Review 4th Ed.
63 Notice map.
WAD’s executive director Veronica de Klerk. WAD has today approximately 4000 members countrywide.

WAD’s mission is "To serve, support and encourage disadvantaged rural women in Namibia

• to organise themselves into self-help groups through motivation and training and to promote income-generating activities and
• to participate in the democratic process of the country that will enhance self-reliance, personal growth, the socio-economic and the socio-political empowerment of women.

The organisation’s vision is "To be empowering agent for disadvantaged women in Namibia to play their rightful role in society with regard to:

• The financial and economic power base of the country;
• Decision-making at all levels of government;
• Participation in the democratic process of the country;
• Self-reliance and freedom of personal choice; and personal growth and human dignity.

4.2 Services provided by WAD

WAD says that they encourage women to make use of their own potential, to stimulate a sense of co-operation and to motivate them to organise themselves into self-help groups. The project activities concentrate on training, assistance in establishing income-generating projects and the promoting of Saving Clubs. The training is based from the needs of the community, provided that a market exists for the skills in which they are trained. Fields of training are for example: home economics, sewing, health, gardening, welding, brick making, computers and others. Before the members are starting their skill development training they undergo basic training in hygiene, nutrition, family planning, child development care, and AIDS awareness. WAD’s training is directed to unemployed, poverty-striking and unskilled. Three groups are priority, those who wants to start their own project, those who wants to be trained to find employment and, and the last priority, home wives who wants to develop/improve skills. When women get in contact with WAD it is important not to treat

64 A.a.
them just as a group of women. WAD always do personal interviews. According to Veronica De Klerk that is very important;

…if you don’t do that you are training them above their head. The interviews are very important; otherwise you’ll be training people in something that you want to train them in, and not what they want to be trained in. You have to know what talents and what the passion are, and where the person wants to be in a few years.

Essentially in WAD’s work is to strengthen the participants’ self-confidence. Veronica De Klerk holds:

The most profound problem that I’ve seen among women is a very simple thing maybe but very important, it’s the lack of confidence. They are so withdrawn when they come to our training centres, almost primitive. They don’t want to voice an opinion. You can see that these people are in bondage, bondage of their mind. The first thing you have to do is to break the chains of bondage.

That WAD is working towards making people gain empowerment is showed in the presentation of their mission and vision. When we ask Veronica what empowerment means to her she reply;

Empowerment means leading women out of ignorance and giving them mental skills and practical skills to improve their living conditions. Not only that but also get them in positions if power, to give them self-confidence to be able to do these things. If they don’t have self-confidence they won’t do it, then they will settle back in the shadows behind their husbands.

4.3 Income generating projects and saving clubs

WAD offers their members to start income generating projects. WAD assists the project members with kick-start equipment or materials. To be supported to start a project you have to come together as group, individuals are not supported. The kick-start support is only given once, as WAD discourages a hands-out or dependency mentality among its members. Sometimes it is given as a loan, depending on the situation. Veronica de Klerk emphasize that the projects shall not be dependent on WAD’s financial support. The members run the projects themselves. WAD’s staff assists the project members on a daily basis with further

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65 Introduction to WAD programmes.
training, with the view to guide them to self-sustainability. Both Olga and Veronica emphasize the importance of supervision and means that it is a prerequisite for the project to survive. Olga says; “to supervise the projects is very important. Many projects\(^{66}\) don’t function well because of lack of supervision. Even when projects becomes a business it is important for us to still be there and let them now that we are.” Veronica consider one of the reasons why WAD is so successful is that they are supported with money from their core donor to be able to supervise the projects in a long going process. She motivates this by saying that the most dangerous part of the project is when the women start to own money from it,

They have no experience on making money, or what to do with them. Now we have to train them further in what to do with the money. We put them in a position of being self-employed. Their salaries will fluctuate; this is what they don’t understand. So now we get a lot of oppositions in our project disciplines. We have to learn them to save some money and invest in materials so that the project can continue.

To meet this need WAD is working with saving clubs. When a project is established WAD train the members to establish a saving club. Every project is attached to a saving club. A saving club is a group of people who come together and agree to save their money as a group. This is necessary because most rural women are not in a position of having their own bank accounts. To open an account on a commercial bank you have to have a relatively high amount of money. The idea with the saving is to make women’s group and their individual members more independent and self-reliant\(^{67}\). They are encouraged to save for necessary expenses and to save as a security for unforeseen costs. The saving clubs are given the members a greater buying power. Together they can buy, for instance, equipment that is difficult to acquire on your own. Together they are given power that they do not have on their own. The saving club’s major objectives are;

- To educate people on how they could use their savings for development.
- To encourage members to work together willingly, to trust one another and to appreciate the importance of close co-operation.
- To provide a forum for club members to discuss their money matter, to share experiences and to give advice where necessary.

\(^{66}\) Outside WAD, authors comment.

\(^{67}\) Introduction to WAD programmes
According to Veronica the saving clubs are a strong component within the WAD projects; “If you don’t attach the project to a saving club you are in trouble.”

The project members save their money on the same account although each member has her own saving book. Many of the members in WAD are illiterate people, they cannot read or write, but they can distinguish between colours. Therefore WAD has come up with a system with different colour stamps so that the women can understand how much money she actually saved. The saving clubs has led to an unexpected positive spin-off effect, to keep the member families small. Veronica is explaining this for us with the following words;

> Once a week the women are saving their money. The day is a joyful day; the women are cooking, dancing and passing around their saving books. That gives them the awareness of that you are saving more money if you have less children. They can see that a woman with two children can save more money than a woman with five children. To see that themselves are much more successful than if a non-Oshiwambo speaking person tells them that.

The awareness of that you are able to save more money than a women with several children, positively influence the members to keep their families small because the evidence is there to be seen and experienced. 68 According to Veronica De Klerk in especially influence the younger women.

If there is an existed market for the projects they can be successful not only to its members but also for the whole community. One example is the Mosquito net sewing project, the project members not only managed to save N$ 30.000,69 the incidence of malaria also dropped by 40 % in the community where their mosquito nets were sold.70

According to Olga, people change a lot by being in WAD projects, mostly the women. She tells us about how many of the women that comes to WAD lived before they joined the organisation:

> Normally they use to be at home, just looking after the children. They do nothing and get money from their husbands. Now they start to stand up for themselves. Before some of them was afraid to stand in front of people and say their view. They change thru self-confidence. Now they can pay the children’s school fees, without waiting for their husbands.

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68 Introduction to the programmes of WAD.
69 One N$ is about 1.10 Kr
70 A.a.
4.4 Women’s voice

WAD has assisted its members to establish the "Women’s Voice” in the regions in which it is active. The members choose female or male representatives to act as their official mouthpiece of the regions. Every region has 7 Women’s Voice members. They address social problems within their community. At a regional level WAD has introduced the Women’s Voice as an instrument to discuss issues of concern to women and the communities with the regional authorities, decision-makers, community leaders, traditional authorities etc. They are trained in how to lobby them. The Women’s Voice has become lobbyists and agents of change in the project regions. They supervise and work towards uplifting community problems, there are several examples of conditions that they have improved by their work. Veronica De Klerk is telling us some of them Hardarp region for instance lacked a mortuary. This was a big problem for the community, especially since the heat made the corps rotten. Women’s voice lobbied their authorities to erect a mortuary, and today it is built. On the basis of this we understand that Women’s Voice is an important factor in the community development. When we interviewed the trainers from Okakarara training centre they all agree on that Women’s Voice is the project that best contribute to community development. Women’s voice also lobbies authorities on educational, and health problems, like drug abuse, alcoholism, AIDS awareness. They also work to insure that jobs in the region are secured for people of that specific region. To be a member of the women’s voice means to be trained and groomed to recognise one’s own worth and develop the courage to start speaking up on women’s issues, but also community matters. 71

The regional Women’s Voice only addresses local and regional issues. On a national level all chairpersons from the six regional women’s voices constitute a national women’s voice. When national issues come up, the regional Women’s Voice refers it to the national Women’s Voice. At the national level WAD is lobbying the cause of women in Namibia to enable them to play their rightful role in the Namibian society. From experiences in the rural areas of the country WAD is convinced that it is almost impossible for poor and illiterate women to assume socio-political functions and participate in political, cultural and social decision-making, unless there is an improvement in their direct living conditions and those of their family. Therefore the grassroot-level-activities are important72.

71 Introduction to the programmes of WAD.
72 A.a.
4.5 Youth skill training through cooking- and computer class

Many of the participants in the WAD projects are youth that have dropped out from school. This is a target group that WAD highly prioritizes. In the interviews with the youth participants in the cooking and computer training class it is emerged that all of them experience that it is easier for them to find employment after participating in the project, where they gain knowledge. One of the participants expresses the importance of skill development:

The best thing with WAD is that you are given a chance to improve your skills. Projects are good things, they are given us knowledge. You can start your own WAD\textsuperscript{73} and earn money from it.

To many of the youth we have been interviewed the development of skills also leads to an increased self-esteem. One of the participants manifest that he feels better about himself after he joined the training:

WAD programme is very important. It keeps us up to date. Here I get a certificate and it’s very important when I seek for job. My life has changed through WAD. I feel better about myself knowing I’m up to date. My self-esteem hasn’t changed that much but a little bit.

Several of the informants express that their life has changed not only through skill development, increased possibilities to find employment, but also that the increased self-esteem changed their life in a positive way. One of them says that: ”I have changed a lot. I was quiet before. Now I can speak out. I have better self-confidence now.”

The trainer of the computer class, similar to, Veronica de Klerk, emphasizes the importance of working towards increasing the participants self esteem. She holds that the importance of skill development and working towards a better self-confidence has equivalent importance in her work.

There are other factors within the training that also can have contributed to the increased self-confidence that many of the participants feel. One of them express that her life has changed in that sense that she found new friends within the project; “Before I was just sitting at home. I have met new friends here and that has given me a better self-confidence.”

\textsuperscript{73} Referring to the income generating projects.
4.6 Introduction to Pamwe

The word Pamwe means together in the most common north Namibian languages Oshiwambo and Kwangali. At independence, the government of Namibia was faced with an acute shortage of standard classrooms in the northern region of this country. It was not unusual to see teaching underneath a tree or similar solutions before the real schools were built. In the northern region very few people was able to read and write. Education level was low and new schools were necessary. The old schools reminded the people of the apartheid era and the government wanted to create something new. In 1990 the Ministry of Basic Education (MBE) in Namibia and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) agreed on a completely new concept for redressing this situation. The concept was taken forward and an approach designed that would involve local communities in extra classroom provision in a much shorter time frame than having to wait for the government to undertake construction and, at the same time, at a lower cost but still conforming to government construction standards. In order to maximise on benefit-spread the objectives and aims were established. The major objective with the project was: to construct standardised classrooms with community participation in the rural northern Namibia to a lower cost than normal government construction programmes. The aim with the project was:

- To involve the local community in the process of building new classroom and toilets and in the maintenance of these buildings.
- To train selected members of the community in basic building skills.
- To support women, as well as men, in acquiring building skills and equal participation in all project activities.
- To support local communities with materials for the construction of these new buildings or maintenance and renovation of existing classrooms.
- To create income generating activities for members of the rural communities.
- To improve the health situation by erecting pit-latrines in each school as a demonstration\(^{74}\).

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\(^{74}\) Namibian Resource Consultants, 1999.
4.7 Structure and history of Pamwe

Pamwe is concentrated to the country’s northern parts. The first Namibians who got in touch with the project in the early 1990’s were people who had been in exile during the apartheid-era, and now wanted to return to build up the country. These exiles Namibian had been working as builder before and was now joining the project. The running order when starting up a school are: The government in the form of the MBE department writes down a list of which parts in the north that needs a school build up. After that the responsible people of Pamwe together with the school board summons to a meeting with everybody in the area of a possible school. Pamwe appoints a Community Mobilizer, whose task is to mediate to the people at the meeting, the idea of the Pamwe Project. Then the population appoints ten people who will work as trainees at the project. These ten people shall be unemployed, between the ages of 20-35 and equal men and women. Sometimes it can be hard to get as many women as men for the project, but the equalisation is a demand that will not be changed. This is particularly important since women’s situation in the northern parts is extremely vulnerable and also, it is not part of women’s traditional culture to devote them selves to manual labour. The community mobilizer has an important job on the field to mediate enthusiasm and guidance to those who participate in the project. Sometimes the local population participates in the building of the school. They do so by fetching sand, cooking for the workers, guarding building material at night etc. Pamwe do not pay the people for this work, but sometimes the trainees pay them with their own money. According to Alexis Tobar you can say that at the places where the community mobilizer has worked up a nice working environment, more parts of the local population participate. AGS and SIDA were known in the region since they had had other projects and also supported Namibia’s struggle for liberty. The local population enthusiastically received Pamwe. The fact that so many volunteered in building the schools gives a sense of doing something together.

The first Pamwe project was set up in November 1991. At this time the MBE, SIDA and support funds were financing the project. Between 1991 through 1994, there were no Swedes on location for the project, but it was financed by SID, although the money was administered by a German fund called Rössing foundation. In 1993 AGS were sent in their first voluntaries to the project and in 1995 AGS took over as implementing agent and the project was expanded. In 1996 AGS began examining the possibilities surrounding the Namibization that aimed at Namibian people taking over the running of Pamwe. They started on the local level and substituted post after post. In 1999 the project became a trust called Pamwe Trust, that is
a fully Namibian Board of Trustees appointed. The idea was from AGS was to leave the responsibility to the Namibians. AGS part today is to contribute with competence and consultation to Pamwe Trust concerning economics and constructing buildings. The rest of the work is controlled from the main office in the capital Windhoek, to five local offices in the northern parts of Namibia. The money for the Pamwe trust comes from MBE and different donations, and also financial contributions from AGS to the volunteers who participate in the project. In later years Pamwe Trust has developed economic issues. When we asked Alexis and Virginia about the fast transition to Nambization can be one of the reasons to Pamwes bad economy today, they felt that that could be the case. Alexis holds that Pamwe Trust is almost run like a company today, which does not work since it was not built for that structure. Pamwe Trust is centralized to the head office in Windhoek where all economic issues are handled. That involves that a lot of the local offices efforts is concentrated on following the strict budget from Windhoek instead of being concentrated on the work on the field. Most people who have continued contact with Pamwe in this way are men. The question is if Pamwe still are a project. In the beginning the idea of Pamwe was that work together to create schools for the country but today it more like a job for many trainees. Virginia holds those projects in general are particularly good when it involves people in community and get them to create something together.

To date Pamwe has constructed 595 classrooms and has trained about 6000 community members. Pamwe projects exist in three provinces in the northern part of Namibia. The projects are named: Nakarapamwe, Tulipamwe and Lokamoho Caprivi. In all the three regions the projects are run in the same way. Pamwe offers basic building education and everyone who participates in the project gets a diploma for his or her knowledge. The purpose of Pamwe is not to give a complete building education as the building of a new school only takes three to five months. Pamwes role in society is carrying the possibility of a real school into effect. In the process of building the school, you learn to cooperate with both other trainees and building advisors. The skills they learn is different things as which portion you mixer cement to mortar and polish wall, paint, put glasses in windows, take measurements, saw and nail on to wood etc. The first moment in every work was to look and listen to the bricklayer and then they get into smaller groups of two or three with one bricklayer each. In these smaller groups they work and the rest is transporting material or is digging. Then they change groups so every one is doing every moment.
4.8 Findings of evaluation

In May 1999 an evaluation of Pamwe done by the Namibian Resource Consultant was clear. The main purpose of that was to see if the Pamwe project raised their objectives. Interviews were held with 40 trainees and one group interview with 30 trainees. The evaluation showed that 80 percent of the trainee builders were very satisfied with the skills they gained and 90 percent of those former trainees felt their ability to find employment had improved due to Pamwe. But a problem in Pamwe, according to the evaluation, is the level of skills which is transferred to the trainees the evaluation says. The overall feeling is that the skills are useful but the majority felt that the training is too short to obtain jobs. The level most be raised to a point were they can obtain jobs are the clear massages of the evaluation.

The evaluation shows that the community members are very supportive of Pamwes method of construction. In small renovation works 33 per cent of the trainees have been contacted by the school they build. The feelings are that they have constructed something useful of which they feel proud and they have improved the school environment for their own children or others.

4.9 Interviews with trainees

We have interviewed three former trainees about their situation today. Today they have employment within Pamwe as supervisors. As supervisors they help new trainees to build new schools. All three felt that Pamwe had affected their life positively. What they feel as the most valuable is that they have learned to interact with people and felt part of what they are doing. We sense a felling of pride when one of them says "Now a days I am self-supporting, and that is the most important for me". They also agree that the projects are important for the communities and even though they do not get paid, family and friends gladly helps getting sand and other things. None of the three we interviewed had heard of the term empowerment. We told them that it meant to take power so that he can change his life situation. After we had explained that we asked them if they felt empowered. They did with following association. One connected empowerment to knowledge and said, "Today I know more about building witch help me and my family". Another said that it makes me proud to be able to work with my hands and teach others do to the same". Regarding to Pamwes gender policy they felt that it was a good policy, but they also thought that it was easier for men to get a job after the project. When asked if there is any difference between men and women’s work within the
project one of them says "men leads, women follows" and another man said "men are better equipped for hard work". Some ex-trainees in the project has later gotten employment in the project, or been re-contacted for repairs and such. Pamwe has not worked with their gender policy here even if they have tried to.
4.10 Empowerment projects

Both projects, Pamwe and WAD, have empowerment as a fundamental idea. We would like the call Pamwe and WAD empowerment projects. We base this on the goals that they have to through motivation and training create income-generating activities for members of the rural communities, in acquiring skills. The projects create resources that according to Kabeer is necessary for people to take action. Furthermore we can motivate this with what Payne believes is that the most effective way to work with empowerment through teaching/training and work as resource consultants.

If empowerment should have a potential in development work it has to be connected with a gender and power analysis over the individual situation. Pamwe and WAD expresses gender perspective through the ambition to work with both sexes, Pamwe shows it by having as many male as female participants. WAD is men friendly and has not only women in the organization, even though their work is to support women’s role in society. Veronica de Klerk the executive director of WAD means that one of the reasons they have succeeded is because they are men friendly. The emphasis in empowerment is put in differences in power and class that stands in the way of self-realization. Both Pamwe and WAD did start as a result of injustices. In Pamwe it was a reaction over the shortage of schools in northern Namibia and in WAD they took action against the fact that women are below men in a traditional sense.

In the projects they work with people from the local community to hire them to be in charge of the project, which is an important thought in empowerment.

The purpose of empowerment and projects is to create positive processes within individuals and groups.75 We have found several definitions where empowerment can be seen as a process. We refer to Simmons & Parson76 who means “empowerment is the process that makes it possible to decide over their own conditions and reach self-determination”.

Conger & Kanungo77 consider that empowerment is “a process were an individual’s faith in his own ability becomes increased”. Successful projects start positive processes with individuals and if those processes are aimed towards empowerment they should be called empowerment projects.

75 Rowland, 1997
76 1983
77 1988
5. Analysis and discussion

The aim with this essay was to elucidate good examples of how you can work in projects on a grass root level to empower marginalized individuals and groups. From an empowerment theory we have analyzed how Pamwe and WAD has contributed to people get empowered. We have been working on the basis of the following questions of issue in attempt to fulfill our aim:

- How can you work in social projects among marginalized individuals and parts of the population in Namibia?
- What possibilities are provided by the Pamwe and Women’s action for development projects to empower the participants?
- How does being empowered affect the individual’s situation?

The projects are directed to unemployed people, unemployment in Namibia are as we elucidated in the introduction chapter, one of the most burning problems next to poverty. To have a job is crucial for the individual’s position in the economy of Namibia. Poorly, unskilled labour is likely to associate individuals with poverty and deprivation. According to Mufane78 the importance of paid employment to escape social exclusion and poverty cannot be overestimated, since employment also effects a person’s social status and his or hers personal dignity. Projects that are directed to solve these problems and that aims to change societal structures we consider as important for the country’s development. Projects can also create empowerment processes among groups that need to strengthen their positions in the society. The starting point for empowerment is powerlessness, which has economic, environmental, social, interpersonal, health, emotional and cognitive dimension. This holds that empowerment must address to all of these dimensions to be successful. Empowerment processes occurs on three levels, which are reinforcing each other: individual, group and societal. In this section we view examples from the projects that can be seen as evidence that the work they do, contribute to empowerment on all these levels.

\[ \text{78 2002.} \]
5.1 Empowerment on an individual level

To analyse whether the projects can promote empowerment on a personal level we have assumed from Oxaal's conception of power within, which refers to the individual’s feelings of him/herself, his/hers self-esteem and self-confidence. It refers to the internal dimension of the ability to influence one's own life, i.e. a sense of agency. For a disempowered individual to be empowered an increase of power is demanded, this power can be seen as an increase of self-esteem and self-confidence. According to Rowlands theory self-esteem and self-confidence are examples of innerly core values within the individual empowerment, which are the most important aspects to address and in where the biggest changes can occur. Veronica de Klerk holds that “the most important thing with her work is to give the participants self-confidence, if they do not have self-confidence they will not be able to change their living conditions, and in the case of the women, they will settle back behind their husbands”. Through WAD and Pamwes skill training the participants achieve skills and self-confidence to complete specific tasks, this is in itself a way to influence self-esteem, it’s a motivating knowledge knowing that the newly found skills will increase the chances to employment. Payne holds that one of the most effective ways to work towards empowerment is through teaching and training, which offers processes and skills that enable people to complete specific tasks. The projects give the individuals an opportunity to achieve something that can contribute with positive experiences for the future, this also creates hope for the future. Like one of the participants in WAD’s skill training projects holds: “The best thing with WAD is that you are given a chance to improve your skills. Projects are good things, they are given us knowledge. You can start your own WAD and earn money from it”. That empowerment, according to Kabeer, got three dimensions: resources, action and performance, which lead people to create power to make individual decisions are something we clearly can see from the participants in the projects and their experiences. All of the people we have interviewed were prior to the project unemployed or school dropouts. Through the projects they got an increase of resources through out their new skills. This contributes to the possibility of achieving results never before seem possible. In other words the increase in power can be explained as one of the trainees in the Pamwe project says: “I feel proud to have been given the chance to learn how to work with my hands and now I can pass this knowledge on to others.” The projects are giving the participants an opportunity to use their skills, talents and knowledge. They can feel that they are doing something useful, thereby promoting their sense of self-esteem and identity. The feeling of “power within” got even more obvious when we meet the youths in the WAD project who
dared to have dream’s about the future, such as starting their own business or going to the university for higher education. The youths participating in the computer project in general felt that they now had the courage to make their voice heard and occupying a greater space than before the project, like one of them say ”I have changed a lot. I was quiet before. Now I can speak out. I have better self-confidence now.” The reason why these youths in particular achieved such an increase of self-esteem could be a result of the achievements the computer project coach had by overcoming her difficulties off speaking in front of large groups of people, and the lack of courage to speak her opinion before entering the WAD project. By once have been in this same situation as the project participants and now gotten “empowered” have created a sense of awareness in her way to see the importance of developing these sides as well as skill training for her students. She holds that develop your innerly is just as important as developing your skills. If you can’t stand up and speak for your self the chances to get employed aren’t as big as for those who can. This is verified by the research from Kvinnoforum, which means that real empowerment is connected to changes within the individual, vedelicet changes in attitude, skills and knowledge. From a holistic approach to empowerment this also means that the achievements can go on and affect other levels, like finding a job. The feeling of having knowledge and be able to use it is one of the most important dimensions of empowerment, it means you have the power within you. To have power within gives you self-confidence and knowledge about you self. When you notice that you are able to do new things in life, the strength inside you will grow. Many of the project participants, especially the older ones have been lacking the power to influence and effect their earlier situation. If we look at the theory about learned helplessness, which means that that you have a deeply founded feeling of “what ever I do I t wont make any difference”, the project can be seen as a opportunity to succeed in something, which according to Barber is a way out of learned helplessness. We got a feeling that the younger participants we been interviewing had a more positive way of looking at the future. Maybe this can be explained by the fact that they as contrary to the older participants not have been growing up or lived in apartheid. They have not at all, or for only a limited time lived in learned helplessness and maybe that’s why they in contrary to the older find it easier to have a more positive approach on the future. Many of the women entering the WAD project have a history of alcohol related problems according to Olga Tijutute. This can be seen as a symptom of learned helplessness. Olga explains the women’s alcohol related problems are a result of earlier having nothing else to do but sitting at home and taking care of the children.
By entering the WAD project the women gets an opportunity to do something meaningful with their time. Instead of sitting at home and drinking they are now taking control of their life, working and earning their own money, no longer depending only on the husband's salary. This can be seen as important from an empowerment point of view. The woman gets an increase level of power, more independent and less dependent of anyone else. To have her own money can make her more inclined to make her own decisions. According to Coleridge, one aspect of being disempowered is to not be able to make own decisions.
5.2 Empowerment on an interpersonal level

Interpersonal empowerment refers to the level of empowerment that occurs on a group level, which can be seen as Oxaal’s power with. Power with means that people organize themselves for a collective purpose with an understanding of how collective goals can be achieved. When people come together for a specific collective purpose and realise that the power they share are larger than the sum of their individual powers. Both the Pamwe and WAD project are aiming for people to organise and work together in a group. The benefits of working on a group level are many. You are given the possibility to achieve goals that would be almost impossible to reach on your own. This has become clear in the WAD’s saving club, where the participants are able to save money on a bank account, which not would be possible if working alone outside the group. This can also be seen as the individual gets empowered by given a greater level of options on what to do with their money. By sharing experiences with the group the individual get the possibility to affect even other choices in life, for instance not to expand their families will result in being able to save more money. Working on a group level can also provide empowerment on an individual level by for instance creating new social contacts, which can promote a greater self-confidence. And even for some, breaking their isolation. The benefits of working in groups are also elucidated in Kvinnoforums report, they mean that you by participate in a group can create social relations with others in a similar situation, which can be seen as a useful experience.

Pamwe is focusing on organizing people to work on a group level, this leads people to get empowered by giving the people in the community the possibility of doing things together. Virginia means that you create the feeling of “now we done something together, and that means that we can work together in the future in order to improve our society.” This can be seen as examples of Rowlands core values in the collective empowerment, which she holds are collective actions and the feeling of group pride. We are impressed of the high level of people that voluntarily help building the Pamwe schools and we see this as a sign on peoples believes on being able to change and create if only the possibility is given, or taken. By people coming together to work towards a purpose can create an increased ability to cooperate, which also is one of the core values in Rowlands theory. It can also mean that they can achieve more power together as a group, which can be difficult standing alone. To succeed with something together is also promoting future co-operation for solving future problems.
5.3 Empowerment on a political and community level

Political empowerment (power to) involves a decision-making authority and can be translated into access of decision-making structures. Power to also involves having influence on defining rules and norms in society. Women’s Voice are a good example on how people can organize themselves on a group level and get power to affect the circumstances under which they live. Women’s Voice open up for a democratic awareness, which gives you a greater opportunity to influence your life, this means that you become more able to take power. Veronica de Klerk gave us one example of how Women’s Voice after pressuring a food shopkeeper made him take away all the old merchandises from the shop and to be able to do that they had to be aware of their rights. In previous research Anna Fogelmarck argue that it is important that people in Namibia become aware of their rights and duties, and that it is much up to the Namibians themselves to create a strong civil society. To not be aware of ones rights make people less inclined to use them. According to Coleridge not having knowledge of ones rights means to be disempowered. From the basis of that Women’s Voice actively works towards consciousness rising people about their rights we consider them to be important actors in promoting empowerment. When people become aware of their rights they are more capable to actively affect community matters. Within the projects they work towards equipping people to be more able to get employment and since that, they also influence the employment structure. Today there are a lot of unskilled people that work as street workers and people who are paid much less than they should. From the interviews we found that the participants think that the projects can contribute to community development by creating jobs and in the case of WAD, make them able to become employers. The projects contribute to lower the amount of low-skilled labour.

According to Payne being empowered means having the ability to take charge of matters that effects us, equipping people with personal resources to take power, by developing their confidence, self-esteem, assertiveness, expectations and knowledge and skills. On the basis of this definition we consider Pamwe and WAD to be good examples of how you can work in projects to get people empowered, as they are directed to above-mentioned aspects.

79 2002.
5.4 Context awareness

To help people effectively in social work you have to be aware of the broader system in which may have an influence of the system in which people you addressing interacts.\textsuperscript{80} This means not only to direct the work towards individuals and groups, it shall also be aimed at changing the societal structure that might oppress people, for instance the employment structure in Namibia. The state must be involved in the social development process, and it is the state’s responsibility to encourage economic growth. Social development assumes cooperation between the state and other actors, like voluntary organisations. In a country that has neither a well-developed social security system nor a state that can provide significant contributions to overcome unemployment there is a need for actors that can contribute. Fogelmarck\textsuperscript{81} holds that voluntary organisations are important for the development of the political culture in Namibia. According to her it takes time to build up a consolidated democracy in a developing country and that voluntary organizations can play an important role in promoting education and possibilities to an income. On the basis of Daveys discussion about that it is an illusion to think that marginalized people are able to mobilize themselves, we consider it difficult and hard for the individuals and groups that we have been studied to do so, because they have lived in poverty and without any real possibilities to self-fulfilment. Social development aims to affect wider groups such as communities or societies and the social relations that take place in those societies. Self-help organisations can be important mechanisms for social development through generating increased interpersonal skills, which we have showed that the projects contribute with. From the starting point they were established by international organisations, but they both had an explicit aim for the projects to become self-sustainable. We consider this as a good idea and maybe a prerequisite to legitimate international organisations to act in the country. An important aspect of empowerment is that people themselves take power, assumed you got the knowledge about your ability to take power.

Pamwe has already created a trust sorely by Namibians and in the local offices there are only Namibians working. All trainers in WAD come from the local community. This holds that they have awareness of the local context in which the participants live, which involves an understanding that could be difficult for a foreigner to have. For instance, that people might not know what to do when they for the first time in their life have an income. From a westernalized thinking might be seen as obvious knowledge.

\textsuperscript{80} Bernstein & Gray, 1997.
\textsuperscript{81} 2000
5.5 Gender

We consider it a great importance that Pamwe and WAD includes gender thinking. Partly from the cultural context in Namibia where women are seen as subordinate the men, but also from the basis of Monica Evérs assumptions that for real empowerment to succeed it must consist a power and a gender analyze. We have met a lot of women in Namibia that not are accepting being treated as less worthy depending on their gender belonging. Without trying to deliver any scientific truth we can state that women are advancing but still have a long way to go. As we mentioned in the introduction chapter women are not only affected negatively by the cultural context, nevertheless by a higher unemployment rate. Veronica de Klerk emphasise that it is a particularly diversity between the younger and the elders vision at equality. We believe and hope that the young generation we have met within the projects berry a faith in equality that can characterize the future Namibia. Through men and women working together within the projects, for instance when building schools, we believe that women’s position can be strengthen. They are given the chance to see that women can be as hardworking as men, and that they equally can accomplish something. The young women we have met within WAD’s cooking class are positive towards men participating, but they are not certain whether they have the courage to participate. We think that a project that is actively working towards equality where both men and women are concerned can be resulted in that the men in the future have the courage to participate. According to Wieringa & Mogotski empowering women does not mean to reverse existing power hierarchies, but rather to empower women and/ or women’s groups to make their own choices and to take control over their own lives. From that definition of women’s empowerment, women organisations like WAD are significant, and can contribute to the changes of the social structure of the country. Pamwe can from our point of view, contribute to give women increased options by giving them access to an otherwise male dominant work. We cannot see that the women should take the job if it not was required from Pamwe to have as much women as men in within the project.
5.6 Capacity building through empowerment projects

A genuine project is something where the movement is the main purpose and the goal is only the beginning. People must be given structures to throughout the project develop meaningful life projects. Pamwe and WAD offer people skill training and income generating activities. These activities can be seen as the starting process in individuals and groups that Davey consider being necessary in order to mobilize. Both Pamwe and WAD are good empowerment projects from the consideration that they start up positive processes within individuals and groups. The aim of empowerment is to broaden people’s view of their situation by developing awareness and giving them vision of their own strength. People who experience a sense of powerlessness have to have their capacity for taking control of their lives built up. Through capacity building people are enabled to take control of their lives. When people realise that they have access to power they feel empowered. Projects can build up people’s capacity and make them feel that they have access to power. Then the projects ought to, according to us, have a structure that offers possibilities to long-lasting income generating activities for real empowerment to be achieved. Otherwise there is a risk that one creates expectations that cannot be fulfilled. We do not know whether the participants we were interviewed are given the ability to really use their knowledge after having been in the projects. According to the evaluation of Pamwe, there are only small possibilities to go further with their knowledge. However, the project’s intention is only to give primary knowledge, which the evaluation indicates will not be enough to provide all the participants in Pamwe with a secure income after the project’s ending. Weather the participants in Pamwe that we interviewed have hope in finding jobs are not easy to evaluate though they already have employment in Pamwe as building advisors. Mufane means that fewer rural people are likely to be looking for work, as work opportunities do not exist. Generally the youth in WAD was hoping to find employment in the future, and they were of the opinion that the certificate they have received was of significance to find a job. That WAD offering the participants to start their own income generating projects we consider create hope for the future, one of the interviewed participants, for instance, dreamed about being a WAD trainer. But as both Veronica and Olga state, a precondition for the survival of the projects are that they are given continuous supervising and training.

82 Bernstein Gray, 1997.
As we see it the participants are more equipped to meet the society’s demands, even if work opportunities are not there. But we also believe that a good empowerment project in Namibia is focussed also towards changing the employment structure.

Naturally, when finished, the projects must have reached the goals and expectations stated in the beginning. In Pamwe it is the community mobilizer who plays the important role of setting the expectations of the project to the local people at the right level. It is crucial that the participant’s expectations may not be set too high or low. Without the expectation of change no projects can be initiated, because these expectations are fundamental in the process of defining the project’s goals. Within the WAD projects, which are run by the members themselves, it is the participants that set up the goals of what they want to reach. WAD only limits this if there is not an existing market for the project, this can be seen as preventing the expectations to be set too high.
5.7 Future of the project

Pamwe might not be seen as a project anymore. Partly because it is now driven on the basis of a foundation, but also partly because of what Virginia is saying, that there must be found new areas to work within. The need is big for new buildings, especially in the north of Namibia, and if Pamwe wants to survive they have got to find and try new ways and forms to work by. If they do not do that it is possible that the project cannot stay in business. There is also the risk that if the project becomes even larger, it will become more of a corporation, up till now it is still run like a foundation. This is a distinction between the projects. WAD shows the result of a stable and surviving project, which will pass to be independent, while Pamwe after “namibization” still has got some problems to solve, especially on the financial side and the project are threatened to closure. The main problem that we can see is the transition from organizational governed to self-sufficiency. In the interview with Alexis and Virginia it became clear that the “namibization” of Pamwe has been too hasty and the knowledge of financial government has not been transferred in a satisfying way. Veronica de Klerk, states that it is the prolonged support and the education in financial issues that has been the most important reason why they have been successful and have survived the transition to self-sufficiency. We mean that this is a very important conclusion to keep in mind when working in projects where ambition is to become independent.
5.8 Objections to the result

We noticed diversity between the answers we were given from Alexis, Virginia and the participants from the Pamwe project, compared to the participants we were interviewing concerning WAD. The First ones were able to give more critical answers than the WAD participants. One possible reason for this might be that Alexis and Virginia are in more secure position, like the ex-trainees who already got employment within the project. This holds that they are not that dependent of their employers as the participants of WAD. This might render possibility to be able to give honest answers without risking any consequences for the future. The WAD participants can be seen as more dependent of the project for their future income possibilities. We do not attempt to give any truthful conclusion on this, we are only reflecting on it. It might be that they did not have any criticism to notify. We did ask the WAD participants if they thought that there was anything that WAD could do better, but none of them meant that there were. Though, we can question if we could have sposed the question differently and have come up with a resulting question that would have made it easier for them to be critical. This can be seen as a flaw of our study. In the interviews with the Pamwe participants and Alexis and Virginia we did use problem-orientated questions, which we clarified by exemplifying with results from the evaluation. For instance when we asked them if they think that the building education they got in Pamwe is long enough to get work after participating in the project, we informed them about that the evaluation highlighted that it could be too short. This might be a leading question.

We consider that it can be difficult to reflect critically if you just ask if there is anything that could be better than if you give examples of possible problems that can occur.

The reason for us asking more problem-orientated questions about Pamwe is that we had access to the evaluation of Pamwe. That made us aware about the problems of the project. During the time for our research there was an evaluation going on of WAD’s work. It is/was the Namibian newspaper, *The Namibian Economist* who were doing/are doing the evaluation. When we were interviewing Veronica de Klerk she gave us phone number and email address to the responsible one at the newspaper. On several occasions we tried to get in contact with this person but every time without result. We consider that the evaluation should have been very useful for our study.
5.9 Empowerment paradox

From the above discussion about dependency of the project we are questioning if you can be empowered though being dependent of the organisation that aims to empower you. This is an empowerment paradox. Empowerment can be a seductive term and you must be aware of the fact that participating in a project does not automatically make you empowered. Power cannot be given to someone, it is the individuals’ possibility to maintain the power within that decides if you get empowered or not\textsuperscript{83}. That one person in a project becomes empowered does not mean that others will. According to Kvinnoforums report there are some threats to empowerment; they are ignorance about resources and their availability, laziness, lack of unity, jealousy, self-centredness resulting in self-serving interest. This holds that the attitudes of the participants affect the opportunity to be empowered through the participation in a successful project. We consider empowerment as process and to participate in a project can be the first necessary step to be able to continue outside the project and create something on your one. According to Wendt the participants most be given the opportunity to step outside of existing power relation to the project if it should be a real empowerment. We consider that both Pamwe and WAD are contributing to make people empowered from the basis of that they develop skills that prepare people be able that one day carry out their dreams outside the projects. As we pointed out before the project raise the participants’ power within, which we see as a good beginning to realization. It might be that WAD is preparing people even more than Pamwe through their active work towards develop the inner in people whereas this comes as a consequence of developing skills and learning to co-operate in Pamwe.

\textsuperscript{83} Wendt, 2001.
6. Summary and conclusion

Pamwe and WAD create new possibilities for individuals and groups, these can make a contribution to a person’s self-realisation. New skills create the feeling of power within. We noticed that the projects structure and the knowledge in which context they exist are important components for the possibility to empower individuals. Both Pamwe and WAD has structures that considerate to support women’s role, works for the Namibians in rural areas and has the ambition to create income generating activities for the participants in their project.

The aim of Empowerment is to make the individual awake of his situation and develop awareness to give him a vision of his own strength. When people realise that they have access to power they feel empowered. Access to power can contribute to the possibility of making choices. The capacity to make your own choice is one of the most important processes within an individual. A person cannot be dependent on the project that contributes to your own empowerment. The purpose must be that the participants one day can live out their own dreams outside the project. Then real empowerment can occur.

Work in social projects aims to create empowerment among marginalized individuals and parts of the population. It is important with projects that can work as supportive systems through capacity building. Successful projects inspire local communities and create the feeling of being able to do other things together in the future to improve their society. To have the feeling of doing something important is necessary for people who have lived in poverty and as a result of this has been affect by learned helplessness without possibilities of realization. In a young democracy where no powerful efforts to overcome poverty and unemployment is done by the government, voluntary organisation projects have a significant role to play.

We consider us to have answered our questions and fulfilled the aim of this paper. From earlier researches we have elucidated that our conclusions can be verified when it comes to importance of projects and what they can achieve.

We wish for this paper to make a contribution for those who want to start or analyze empowerment projects in Namibia or countries of the same character.
6.1. Further research

Finally we establish that it would have been interesting to do a follow-up research after some years to see how the participants live and what influence the projects have had on their life situation in a long-term perspective. Since empowerment is a process that can be seen as beginning when the participants take part within the projects, it can be difficult to really measure how significant the projects has been for the participants as long as they still are in the project.
References


**Other publications**

Introduction to the programmes of WAD, Women’s action for development: Windhoek.


**Interviews**

Alexis Tobar and Virgina Mayorga, 04 02 17 and, 04 03 02

Trainees in Pamwe, 04 02 25

Project coordinator Olga Tjurutue, 04 02 18 and 04 03 04

WAD’s training participants, 04 03 04

WAD’s executive director, Veronica de Klerk 04 03 09
Appendix 1: Interview questions for Alexis and Virgina, 040217

1. How did you get in contact with ASG and Pamwe?
2. What was your role in the Project?
3. What contact did you have with the participant in Pamwe?
4. How did the process look like when a school should were built up?
5. Did the project send information to people in the community about the school building?
6. Is it hard to motivate people to become a participant in the project?
7. Which people are the projects aimed for?
8. How is the trainees selected to the project?
9. Witch skills are they learning?
10. Is it any different in what you learn based on witch region you were a participant?
11. What is Pamwes gender policy?
12. Which reaction has this create in the community?
13. AGS has been working with Namibization, what does that mean?
14. What does Pamwe contribute to more than skills in building?
15. Is there any evaluation made on Pamwe?
16. What contacts do you have in the local office in Oshakati?
17. Is it possible to make one more interview with you after we been in Oshakati?
Appendix 2: Interview questions for second interview with Alexis and Virginia, 040302

1. As we had understand it the money to Pamwe comes from MBE and SIDA and was managed by Rössing foundation is that correct?

2. What part does Rössing Foundation have today?

3. When the AGS did take over the management 1995, was it still MBE how paid for the school buildings?

4. 1996 started the Namibization of the project how was it made?

5. Witch consequence can you see of the Namibization?

6. How does Pamwe Trust work today?

7. Which roll does AGS have today?

8. How does the activity look like in the local offices today?

9. Who are donating the money today to Pamwe trust today?

10. What benefits can you see with being a trust?

11. What definitions do you have about the term project?

12. Do you think that Pamwe still can be called a project?

13. In general what does local projects has to offer Namibia?

14. The evaluation says that the training in basic skills is not enough to create long time income generation activates, what are your comments about that?

15. Are they any plans to develop Pamwe in to new areas for the basic buildings skills, and what could that be?

16. The participant means that is easier for male then female to get a work offer the project, is it something you recognise?

17. We are writing our paper about empowerment, are you familiar whit the term?

18. How would you like to explain the meaning of empowerment?

19. Do you think that Pamwe can be called an empowerment project?

20. Is it any more you would like to add to this interview?
Appendix 3: Interview model for Trainees in Pamwe, 040225

1. What is your
   A, Name
   B, Age

2. Were you aware of Pamwe before you became a trainee?

3. What is your current employment status?

4. Have you been employed since Pamwe?

5. In the job you have today can you use the skills you gained in Pamwe?

6. Do you now of other trainees how was in the project at same time as u are employed?

7. Do you think that your ability increased through be a trainee?

8. A, Has the project made any big changes in your life?
   B, if yes, in what way?

9. The education in basic building skills that Pamwe offers, is that enough to create an income generating activities for the trainee?

10. Do you think it is any different in employment status between male and female trainees?

11. What is your opining about Pamwes gender policy?

12. Result from an evaluation pointed out that Pamwe project how involves the community brings the feeling that the school belong to the community, do you agree on that?

13. A Are you familiar with the concept empowerment?
    B, if yes, in what way?
    C, if not, Empowerments purpose is to make people powerful to change and take control over your life situation. Can you say that Pamwe has done that?

14. Do you think in general that social projects can create job opportunities?

15. What is that most important thing you learned in Pamwe?

16. Is it something you like to add to this interview?
Appendix 4: Interview questions for project coordinator Olga Tjirutue, 040304.

1. Can you see that some projects are more effective than others?

2. Last time you said that women change a lot by being a member of WAD, why do you think they change?

3. What is the most important thing with your work?

4. Do you think that the projects can contribute to community development? How?

5. Do the women run the projects without any support?

6. What kinds of project are most needed in this area?

7. What is the problem in your community today?

8. What is empowerment for you?

9. How do you define a project?
Appendix 5: Interview questions for WAD’s training participants, 040304.

1. How long have you been in WAD’s training project?
2. Has your life changed since you became a participant?
3. How has your life changed?
4. What is the best thing with WAD?
5. Is your self-confidence better today than before you became a participant?
6. What can you do today that you couldn’t before?
7. Do you think it’s easier for you to find a job today?
8. What would you like to work with?
9. What is needed for you to reach that goal?
10. How do you think that WAD can contribute to community development?
11. Is there anything that WAD can do better?
12. Do you think that projects like WAD can create job?
13. What kind of projects is most needed in the community?
14. Has your ability to do your own business risen?
15. What kind of business would you like to do?
Appendix 6: Interview questions for WAD’s executive director, Veronica de Klerk, 040309.

1. How did WAD started?
2. Why did WAD started? What problems could you see?
3. Is the aim of WAD the same today as than?
4. How do the participants get in contact with WAD?
5. Who is participating?
6. Which participants benefit the most?
7. What changes have you seen in women who has been participating in WAD?
8. What are the impacts of women’s empowerment at community level?
9. How do you determine who is participating in the projects?
10. Can you see any side effects of the projects that you did not anticipated?
11. What is empowerment for you?
12. What do you think is the most important thing with your work?
13. Do you evaluate your work?
14. What role do you think projects play in for community development?
15. How do you work with financial management?
16. How do you work to gain socio-economic and socio-political empowerment?
17. How do you train the members in Women’s voice?
18. Some of the participant pays fees to be in the project, do you think that means that the poorest people can’t participate?
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