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**A Capability Approach Critique of Educational
Activities for Women in Dhamar Participatory Rural
Development Programme, Yemen**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother

Fatima Al-Farah (Fatum),

a strong woman whom I still miss every day.

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Abstract

This thesis offers a capability approach critique of education activities, policies and programmes for women in rural communities in the Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Programme implemented by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Yemen. It examines whether the policies and programmes assisted individuals to gain new skills, knowledge and access to opportunities which enabled them to do and be what they valued in life. Illiteracy remains a particularly acute problem among women in rural communities due to a combination of cultural factors and the dire economic situation. IFAD was selected for its long experience and extensive reach in Yemen's poor rural communities, commitment to gender equality, and commitment to rural participatory development.

A philosophical stance of critical realism facilitated investigation of multiple layers of reality: perceptions and experiences; actions and events; and underlying causal mechanisms. A capability approach framework was used to examine whether the purposes, policies and processes of the Dhamar programme promoted and enabled a range of opportunities for women to choose from and the abilities they needed to act on their choice. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with IFAD staff, national and international consultants, and staff from relevant Ministries. Interviews elicited perceived reasons for International Development Organisation (IDO) interventions in Yemen, views of the project and participatory processes, and the challenges and barriers faced. My autoethnographic account of experiences as a Yemeni woman provided particular insight into challenges and barriers. Data were analysed using qualitative methods and findings brought together under capability approach headings.

The thesis concludes that whilst the participatory approach enabled the development of capabilities of some women, serious challenges remained. Suggested strategies for improvement include: support after the project ends; increased dialogue addressing unequal distribution of resources and power; and closer working among IDOs to facilitate securing resources and additional opportunities.

Contents	
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
ABBREVIATIONS	x
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Contextualisation of the study	1
1.2 Problem statement	2
1.3 Positionality	4
1.4 Research Aim, Objectives, Questions	8
1.4.1 Research aim	8
1.4.2 Research objectives	8
1.4.3 Research questions	8
1.4 Significance of study	9
1.5 Thesis structure	10
Chapter 2 Context of the study	12
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Location and Geographical Features	12
2.3 Yemen, the Arabia Felix	13
2.4 Political and economic turmoil in Yemen	14
2.5 Arab Spring Revolution	15
2.6 Women in Yemen	16
2.7 Education and women in Yemen	18
2.8 Impact of Arab Spring on education	19
2.9 Overview of IDO education and development initiatives in Yemen	20
2.10 The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	26
2.11 IFAD in Yemen	29
2.12 Conclusion	29
Chapter 3 Education and development	31
3.1 Introduction	31
3.2. Education, development and women in Yemen	31
3.3. Education and development in international agency programmes of work	34
3.3.1 Understandings of education and development	34
3.3.2 Education in international agency programmes of work	38
3.3.3 Poverty, education and women	39
3.4 The role of international development organisations	41
3.4.1 Approaches to development	42
3.5 Education and development programmes in fragile contexts	48

3.6 Summary.....	54
Chapter 4 Capability approach: conceptual framework.....	58
4.1 Introduction.....	58
4.2 Capability approach.....	58
4.2.1 Functionings.....	60
4.2.2 Capabilities	61
4.2.3 Conversion factors	62
4.2.4 Agency	64
4.3 Conceptual framework.....	65
4.4 Summary.....	67
Chapter 5 Research Methodology	70
5.1 Introduction.....	70
5.2 Methodology and Methods	71
5.3 Options in research design	72
5.3.1 Critical realism	73
5.4 Ontology	74
5.5 Epistemology.....	75
5.5.1 Research through a feminist lens	77
5.6 Methodological Approach.....	81
5.7 Documents	85
5.8 Interviews	85
5.8.1 Pilot interviews	88
5.9 Autoethnography as Research Method.....	89
5.9.1 Coming to autoethnography	90
5.10 Sampling Procedures.....	94
5.11 Data collection	98
5.12 Data analysis	99
5.13 Research Quality	101
5.13.1 Note on Translation.....	102
5.14 Ethical Considerations	102
5.15 Challenges	103
5.16 Conclusion	104
Chapter 6 Family Influence and Culture Challenge	105
Chapter 7 Data Analysis: Policies and Processes.....	119
7.1 Introduction.....	119
7.2 Data analysis process.....	119
7.3 Outputs.....	122

7.3.1 Documents as outputs.....	122
7.3.2 Programme outputs.....	127
7.3.3 Programme outcomes	130
7.3.4 Processes.....	131
7.4 Beyond the observable	134
7.5 A note on language	136
7.6 Conclusion	137
Chapter 8 Thematic Analysis of Interviews	139
8.1 Introduction.....	139
8.2 Data analysis process	140
8.3 Social context and public conversion factors findings	141
8.3.1 Institutions and interventions.....	142
8.4 Safety and security	156
8.5 Partnership, participation and power	157
8.6 Influence of social norms on decision-making	165
8.6.1 Summary of findings.....	173
8.7 Conclusion	176
Chapter 9 Analysis of autoethnographic data	178
9.1 Introduction.....	178
9.2.1 Strong women	178
9.2.2 Role models	178
9.2.3 Exposure to other ways of living or wider culture.....	179
9.2.4 Social pressures.....	180
9.2.5 Opportunities and options.....	180
9.3 Self Reflections	181
Chapter 10 Chapter Discussion	183
10.1 Introduction	183
10.3 Social Context and Public Conversion Factors.....	185
10.3.1 Partnership and participation in IFAD policy and process	186
10.3.2 Social norms in gender relations	190
10.3.3 Power and empowerment.....	194
10.3.4 Lost in translation.....	197
10.4 Resources	199
10.5 Social influences on decision making.....	200
10.6 Blame the culture	202
10.7 Extension of capabilities	202
10.8 Exercising agency.....	203

10.9 Agency, structure and domination	205
10.10 Conclusion	207
Chapter 11 Conclusions and recommendations	208
11.1 Addressing the research objectives and questions	208
11.1.1 First research objective	208
11.1.2 Second research objective	209
11.1.3 Third research objective	211
11.1.4 Fourth research objective	212
11.1.5 Fifth research objective	215
11.2 Recommendations	216
11.3 Reflections on the research process	218
11.5 Contribution to knowledge	219
11.6 Future work	221
11.7 Conclusion	221
References	225
APPENDIX A Interview Guide.....	246
APPENDIX B Ethical Approval.....	249
APPENDIX C Participant Consent Form	252
APPENDIX D Images from Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Project 253	
APPENDIX E Conference Presentations.....	256

List of figures

Figure 2-1 The Republic of Yemen and the location of IFAD's project area, Dhamar	13
Figure 2-2 Educational attainment of women in Yemen	20
Figure 2-3 UN and its agencies	28
Figure 3-1 The Fragile States 2018.....	50
Figure 4-1 Elements of capability building approach	67
Figure 5-1 Research Process.....	72
Figure 7-1 Capability approach categories highlighted in IFAD policies and processes	120
Figure 7-2 Key elements of IFAD participatory rural development process in Dhamar	134
Figure 8-1 Capability approach categories highlighted in participant interviews	139

List of tables

Table 2-1 Programme and Project Partners	22
Table 5-1 Types of Research by Philosophical Foundation	77
Table 5-2 Data collection methods to address research questions	84
Table 5-3 Participant profiles.....	96

Table 5-4 Number, type and times of contacts with participants.....	97
Table 7-1 Key issues from IFAD documentation	137
Table 8-1 Social context and public conversion factors: themes and sub-themes.	141
Table 10-1 Key findings by element of the capability approach framework.....	185

ABBREVIATIONS

BERA	British Educational Research Association
BDNP	Basic Development Needs Programme
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COSOP	Country Strategic Opportunities Programmes
DPRDP	Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Programme
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FSI	Fragile States Index
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
HDI	Human Development Index
IDO	International Development Organisation
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSWD	National Strategy for Women Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SCG	Savings and Credit Groups
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNA-Yemen	United Nations Association of Yemen
UNCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAHEW	Village Animal Health Extension Worker
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
WID	Women in Development
WNC	Women National Committee

Chapter 1 Introduction

Education makes us the human beings we are. It has major impacts on economic development, on social equity, gender equity. In all kinds of ways, our lives are transformed by education and security. Even if it had not one iota of effect [on] security, it would still remain in my judgment the biggest priority in the world. (Amartya Sen, September 4, 2003, WIDE ANGLE interview)

1.1 Contextualisation of the study

Yemen has faced multiple political and economic challenges for several decades, including the war which began in 2015 (Feierstein 2019). At times the country has experienced a major humanitarian crisis (Abdellatif et al. 2019, p. 27) and humanitarian aid agencies have stepped in. In less extreme times, there are many international development organisations like the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) working in partnership with government, local authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The country seeks financial and technical support from those agencies to help the country to reform its policies and develop and improve its approaches towards helping its people, particularly disadvantaged groups. Girls and women in rural areas are one such group who typically find themselves severely constrained by Yemen's conservative and traditional tribal society, mostly being moulded into a traditional role as a wife and mother, with few opportunities to access education, widen their horizons, or progress further. IFAD is one of the International Development Organisations (IDOs) that work with these women. There are also some exceptional women who challenge the prevailing culture and use every available opportunity to build their own lives.

Following Sen (1992, pp. 40, 44), the range of possible options from which individuals can choose between different ways of living is termed capability or capability set. Capability is a combination of the skills, knowledge and attributes of an individual and the opportunities available to use them. In my thesis I intend to critically explore the role of IFAD in relation to its educational activities, policies and programmes for women in rural communities through consideration of the extent to which the design and implementation of policies and programmes support the expansion of capability.

1.2 Problem statement

Yemen has an historic and strategic importance in the region which has been overshadowed by the multiple development challenges faced by the country before and after unification in 1990. These challenges have impacted negatively and directly on people's lives, particularly on marginalised groups such as girls and women in rural areas. The challenges include the difficulty of the state in meeting people's basic needs as well as the overall descent into increasing turmoil.

Girls and women are particularly disadvantaged in many areas including lack of access to education, lack of political participation and lack of paid employment. In 2019, Yemen was ranked last in the Global Gender Gap index for 13 years running (Harb, 2019). According to a World Bank report (2014) there are continuing significant gender gaps in the roles of men and women in both the household and the community. According to this report, a staggering 90% of working age women did not participate in the paid labour force, compared to 20% of men. The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) (2010, p. 19) indicated that women's participation in economic activity was low outside of farming, whilst within farming they were the major contributors to agriculture and livestock breeding as well as undertaking household chores and childcare.

With regard to education, the 2013 Yemen National Health and Demographic Survey (Central Statistical Organization 2013) reported that:

more than 2 in 5 Yemeni women have had no education. An additional 37% have attended school at the fundamental level and 15% have gone to secondary school. A small percentage (6%) of women in Yemen have attended higher education (2013, p. 2).

The level of illiteracy among women is high, estimated at around 70% in total in 2009 by the Ministry of Education (MoE 2009) and 55% in 2015 (CIA World Factbook 2019), the latter ranking Yemen among the 35 worst countries for illiteracy levels. The rate is estimated to be more than twice as high in rural as in urban areas (MoE 2009). The weakness of the economy has inhibited the ability of the state to provide enough female teachers and good quality schools for girls in a country where mixed schooling is culturally unacceptable (MoE 2009). The Yemeni Women's Situation Report issued by the Supreme Women Council, National Women Committee (2013, p. 16) illuminates the situation of girls as compared to boys. According to the report, 60% of 10-year-old girls are illiterate as compared to 21% of boys of the same age. The same

report shows that the gender inequalities in basic education are high; the enrolment rate of girls is 65% (6-14 years), compared with 84% of boys, a gender gap of 19% in favour of males. The basic education dropout rate of girls is estimated to be almost 13% compared to nearly 10% of boys.

Illiteracy and poverty are said to create a vicious cycle, whilst “the ‘multiplier effect’ of literacy empowers people, enables them to participate fully in society and contributes to improve livelihoods” (UNESCO 2020, p. 14). Yemen has typically featured among the poorest thirty countries in the world. According to the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index, in 2013 almost 50% of Yemeni people were living below the national poverty line and just under 20% were living on less than \$1.90 in purchasing power parity terms a day (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2019).

Various development programmes have been introduced by International Development Organisations (IDOs) over more than four decades to support the government to reduce poverty and illiteracy in Yemen. Although several IDOs continue to participate in educational improvement and poverty reduction projects (e.g. Taher 2006; Kefaya 2007; Hanemann 2009; IFAD 2011a), the situation has yet to improve. Stated reasons include: inefficient and under-resourced national mechanisms and a lack of gender-related advocacy at the policy level (Taher 2006); cultural, religious and political factors (Kefaya 2007); Ministry of Education failure to continue successful literacy projects (Hanemann 2009); prolonged interruptions due to conflict (Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development 2018; Feierstein 2019); and an over-dependency on Western finance created by Western nations themselves (Millroy 2010).

It is argued that education is an important capability, not only in itself (Sen 1999a; Unterhalter 2003; Nussbaum 2003) but because it can open up other possibilities in life. According to Nussbaum, “When poverty combines with gender inequality, the result is acute failure of central human capabilities” (2000, p. 3). Nussbaum’s statement of the problem is far too large to tackle in a doctoral thesis. However, investigation of the design and implementation of educational activities provided by an IDO may shed light on what can be achieved and improved in a setting of rural poverty and gender inequality. This thesis offers a critical examination of whether IFAD policies and programmes targeting poverty reduction and women

empowerment extend the capability of illiterate women in poor rural communities by addressing the educational skills and knowledge they need to take advantage of opportunities offered by the project and improve their lives.

1.3 Positionality

This section highlights my relevant personal and professional background in order to explain my subjectivity in my research decisions such as my choice of field of study, research topic and methodology. I also look at my position as an insider, outsider or somewhere in between, depending on the stage of the research. Sikes (2004, p. 18) asserts that “positionality reveals ...where you are coming from in terms of philosophical position and fundamental assumptions”. I believe that as a researcher in the social sciences, my own principles, as Winter (2000, p. 129) states, are “inevitably embedded within the research and play a significant role in shaping it”. My own values and experience played a significant role in shaping my research and deciding what data to collect. It is highly probable that a researcher’s positionality influences the analysis and interpretation of data (Bourke 2014). It exerts an influence on the design and processes involved in any research as well as the ways in which ethical considerations are addressed (Clough and Nutbrown 2012). The reader needs to know how my own position affects the research in order to understand and evaluate the findings in the light of my philosophical background and my underlying assumptions concerning “social reality, the nature of knowledge and human nature and agency” (Sikes 2004, p. 18). The importance of sharing my background as it relates to the area of study is supported by Ellis and Bochner (2000) who argue that this helps the reader to be more engaged with the research. As Sikes (2004, p. 19) states, “it is essential to understand where the researcher come[s] from”.

I describe key events and episodes in my personal journey in more detail in Chapter 6 as they are one of the data sources I use, but I need to give some basic information here to explain my positionality. I graduated in 1998 with a BA degree in Political Science from the Faculty of Commerce and Economics at the University of Sana'a, Yemen. I worked for approximately ten years in Yemen in diverse but related fields of finance and politics, economics, women's rights and education. These experiences included various positions of responsibility in local and international organisations: a Coordinator for United Nations Association of Yemen (UNA-Yemen), and Finance and Administration Manager for one of the World Bank projects in the Ministry of

Finance as well as the United Nations Development Project (UNDP) in the Office of the Prime Minister of Yemen. I then made a conscious decision to resign and become actively involved with community and charity work, particularly women's issues. I developed my knowledge and understanding of women's rights and trained in Lebanon to be a professional gender and development trainer, before working as a professional freelance trainer for CARE International and local NGOs in Yemen. In connection with this work, I published a training manual in Arabic which aimed to enable women to develop and start their own income generation projects. Whilst my work was very satisfying in terms of working with women within, or much closer to, their own communities, I noticed that I was giving women new skills and knowledge but not often the opportunities to use them, partly because projects were short-term and were not usually connected to follow-on funding or other projects.

As a woman activist, I possess a strong belief that education is about nothing if it is not about developing and empowering people as well as effectively resulting in narrowing the gender gap. I believe that the purpose of women's education is not just to transmit knowledge and ideas but, as stated by Hughes and Kennedy (1985, p. 74), "also to provide a space for women in which the process of such discovery and learning builds up their confidence and their empowerment". I grew up in a traditional society that believes in inequality and gender differences. I come from a traditional tribe where education for girls is not a priority for many reasons. As summarised by a Yemeni proverb, 'To educate a woman is wrong because she has no place but her husband's home'. Through personal experience I have learnt that education can lead to empowerment, respect from others and willingness to challenge stereotypes. I have also become more conscious of the importance of sharing my experience to encourage girls and women to find ways of working together for the benefit of all.

Since coming to the UK in 2004, my involvement in projects has centred upon community activities and charitable works. While reflecting on my work experiences, my interest in education sparked my curiosity and interest in community work and women's studies, leading me to complete two courses in the School of Education at the University of Sheffield: the Women's Studies certificate and the M.A. in Working with Communities: Identities, Regeneration and Change. Now my cherished hope is that I can somehow put all this experience to good use in a critical exploration of how international development organisations seek to benefit women in poor agricultural

communities through education, using the International Fund for Agricultural Development involvement in rural Yemen as a case study.

However, positionality is not as simple as 'my positionality' because it is also "determined by where one stands in relation to 'the other'" (Merriam et al. 2001, p. 411). I am not the centre of this research; I have data from participants and documents to analyse and interpret, but my data are also important. I consider myself as an 'extra value' voice that comes from the same culture and background and work experience. When I thought about my positionality in relation to my participants, it was more complicated than I expected, even though I understood the concepts of insider, outsider, 'the space between' (Corbyn Dwyer and Buckle 2009, p. 60; Hellowell 2006) and a continuum that runs from complete outsider to complete insider. I understood that the insider-outsider continuum is criss-crossed by other continua such as values, social and cultural norms, power and representation (Merriam et al. 2001). I understood that positionality is not fixed but can change many times during the research process, but I found my position swinging between insider, outsider and somewhere in between in all the stages of my research and sometimes from moment to moment. I also found it difficult at times to untangle the different aspects of my positionality.

For example, some of my participants were directly involved in the design and implementation of the Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Programme (DPRDP). Other participants offered a range of broader perspectives (such as economic, financial, gender, national initiatives) on rural development policies and programmes in Yemen and other countries. I did not select programme beneficiaries themselves as participants because I sought to gain a deeper understanding of the intentions behind the programme and to identify potential barriers and challenges at the design and implementation levels of which beneficiaries might not be aware. In order to achieve this, I needed to gather the perceptions of implementers, whose views were likely to reflect more fully the economic, socio-cultural and political conditions in which the programme operated. Sharing the Arabic language made it easier to communicate with some participants in some of the interviews, but I sometimes assumed that because we shared a background in international development, we shared meanings of the language we used. Yet I found that my own assumptions of the meaning of words like 'education' and 'gender mainstreaming'

were not always shared. This was very obvious with at least one of the men I interviewed, where his formal position of authority and the fact he was being interviewed by a female led him to take a patronising and even a dismissive tone. In a conservative society like Yemen, being a female researcher working with female participants is easier in terms of approaching them in varied locations, investing more time in talking and discussing broader issues related to the research topic, as well as visiting them at their house. When I interviewed a very busy project director who invited me to meet her at her home in the evening and then to have follow up meetings at a café then at her office, this was appropriate for us as women 'insiders' in a certain segment of society, but it would not have been possible for me to meet a man in this way.

Sometimes the positionality changed in the middle of an interview, as when a conversation in an informal setting with an international consultant started smoothly with a good level of power balance until I asked for clarification about issues related to the work of IDOs and, specifically, any political purposes associated with their interventions in developing countries such as Yemen. Suddenly the power balance shifted, and I felt the weight of her seniority in age and experience. I felt pushed to an outsider position by her comments such as "I know more than you!" and "I have been working in developing countries including Yemen since the 1970s". I was challenged with questions: "why are you studying this area?" and "have you obtained permission from the organisation under investigation?".

When I was analysing data, I struggled to find a good balance between insider and outsider in the sense that, at first, I interpreted much of the data from an insider perspective instead of reflecting back to theory and literature and taking participant perspectives into account. I therefore had to be very careful where and how to use my personal involvement as a participant, so I separated it out in my data collection, made sure it was relevant to the research topic and then used thematic analysis as well as critical self-reflection to find its proper place. This position is important to my research; it helps to support the data gathered directly from my participants and to reposition my voice during data analysis and discussion.

1.4 Research Aim, Objectives, Questions

1.4.1 Research aim

The research aims to develop a critical understanding of whether the educational activities for women in IFAD's development policies and programmes were perceived by those involved in its design and implementation to develop the capabilities of women in rural communities in Yemen.

1.4.2 Research objectives

- To explore the reasons why international development organisations such as IFAD choose to intervene in Yemen.
- To understand the development processes employed by IFAD in Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Programme (DPRDP)
- To explore the effectiveness of the programmes, policies and education activities in relation to developing the capabilities of women in rural communities in Yemen.
- To ascertain the challenges and barriers faced by IFAD in seeking to enable women to participate and expand their capabilities
- To identify areas for improving IFAD policies, practices and education activities for women to enhance their capabilities.

1.4.3 Research questions

The overarching research question was framed as:

To what extent are IFAD development policies and programmes perceived by those involved in their design and implementation to provide educational activities that enable women in rural communities in Yemen to develop their capabilities?

This was broken down into five subordinate questions, namely:

1. What are the stated reasons as to why IFAD and other international development organisations intervene in Yemen?
2. How are IFAD's processes for developing education and other initiatives perceived to involve women in rural communities in Yemen?

3. How effective are programmes, policies and education activities perceived to be in terms of developing the capabilities of women in rural communities in the Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Programme?
4. What challenges or barriers are considered to be faced by IFAD in seeking to enable to participate and expand their capabilities?
5. What further strategies could be adopted to enhance the participation of women in educational activities within the targeted communities and expand their capabilities?

1.4 Significance of study

To my knowledge, this study is one of the first, certainly in Yemen, to offer a capability approach as a framework for identifying process and policy issues related to meaningful delivery by IDOs of educational opportunities to women in poor rural communities. In addition, the use of critical realism as a philosophical approach has enabled data to be analysed from different perspectives and at different levels to generate a multi-layered picture of the challenges and opportunities involved. Multiple techniques were used in analysing data and bringing together findings from three different sources, namely policy and programme documents, interviews with people responsible for delivery initiatives, and an autoethnographic contribution. The autoethnographic account offers novel insight and depth into the experience of being a Yemeni woman whose experiences range from living the culture as a child to working as a women development consultant for an international charity in the country.

The capability approach lens helped to identify areas where improvements could be made. Partnership working could be improved at all levels. From the early stage of the development programmes and activities through the entire process, further attention to the involvement of local expertise and project beneficiaries is required. Consideration should be given to how beneficiaries who wish to further extend their capabilities are able to do so after a project ends. For many women, choices and opportunities remain severely limited outside the training room, unless they are able to access additional resources. Some possible options are proposed.

It is therefore proposed that the significance of this study is in part the novel application of a capability approach together with the multi-layered perspective offered by autoethnography and critical realism. In addition, it will enable individuals and

organisations engaged at various levels in delivering similar initiatives to consider how further improvements might be made. I consider my research to be significant in enriching both the theoretical and practical aspects of the work of IDOs in fulfilling their statutory remit of empowering and educating women.

1.5 Thesis structure

There are eleven chapters in this thesis. The current chapter has set out the research problem, aim and objectives, and provided an overview of the whole thesis. The next chapter provides a clear background about the country: its location and geographical features of the area where this research was conducted, together with an outline of political and historical events in Yemen which are relevant to the research. It provides a general overview of International Development Organisation interventions in Yemen with particular reference to education initiatives and the specific activities of IFAD in the Dhamar Project. Chapter 3 examines the nature and theoretical underpinnings of education and development in international agency programmes of work. It presents and discusses findings from the literature in this area of study, highlighting similarities and differences. The chapter creates a space for an overview of fragile country contexts with particular attention to that of Yemen within which international development programmes operate. The thesis adopts a relevant conceptual framework that is able to address both the international development and education aspects of the thesis and bring together the findings from three different sources, namely policy and programme documents, participant interviews, and an autoethnographic contribution. The selected capability approach and application of the framework to suit my research are presented in Chapter 4. The qualitative research process from design to data analysis is outlined and justified, after which relevant ethical considerations are discussed. The selected case study draws on multiple techniques for data collection: semi-structured interviews and documentation, together with an autoethnographic contribution which enriches the study (Chapter 5).

My story then reviews my personal experience within Yemen's conservative society and shares the impact of family and education on my life from childhood until the time of writing these lines. The presentation of the story of one individual gives the researcher an opportunity to be part of this important research, bearing in mind that the story is part of the data, but it is not the centre of the study (Chapter 6). The data analysis and findings are presented in chapters seven, eight and nine: policies and

processes (Chapter 7); participants (Chapter 8); autoethnography (Chapter 9). Chapter ten acts as a full orchestra under a conductor, bringing together and discussing the key findings from the analysis chapters. In addition, the chapter presents possible recommendations. Finally, the thesis concludes with a summary of the main outcomes of the research and possible suggestions for future research (chapter 11).

Chapter 2 Context of the study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets the context of the thesis. The chapter presents the location and geographical features of the area where this research was conducted, together with an outline of political and historical events in Yemen which are relevant to the research. It provides a general overview of International Development Agency interventions in Yemen with particular reference to education initiatives and the specific activities of IFAD in the Dhamar Project. The chapter concludes with a summary of key contextual factors.

2.2 Location and Geographical Features

The Republic of Yemen is situated in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula, sharing borders with the Sultanate of Oman to the north, Saudi Arabia to the east, and the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea to the south and west. The capital city is Sana'a which is located in the north. Yemen has a strategic location at the entrance of the Strait of Bab al- Mandeb, connecting the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea. The country is mainly farmland with a population of around 28 million, of whom over 80 per cent live in rural areas.

Yemen is just over twice the size of the UK (at almost 537,000 km²) and is divided into 21 governorates for administrative purposes. IFAD focuses its initiatives on five of these governorates, namely Abyan, Amran, Al Hudaydah, Lahj and Dhamar, which can be seen in Figure 2.1. Based on the Yemen National Information System, Dhamar governate covers an area of 7586 km² (roughly six times the size of Greater London) and lies some 760-2848m above sea level. The population of Dhamar governate is approximately 1.3 million. Women living there have the key responsibility for “raising livestock, producing crops and managing their households, are largely illiterate. They have limited rights of ownership or control of assets, and their participation in social and civic affairs is restricted” (Etheredge 2011, p. 86; IFAD 2011a, p. 6; UN: Population Division 2017, p. 838).



Figure 2-1 The Republic of Yemen and the location of IFAD's project area, Dhamar

Source: IFAD (2014, p. 1)

2.3 Yemen, the Arabia Felix

The Republic of Yemen has a long and ancient history. It is one of the oldest civilizations in the world and was ruled by a number of indigenous dynasties in several kingdoms including the Kingdom of Sheba which was ruled by Queen Bilqis during the 6th century BC. Numerous Yemeni cities are listed by the UNESCO (2016) as World Cultural and Natural Heritage sites such as the old city of Sana'a, Shibam, Zabid, and Socotra. The Old City of Sana'a is known "as one of the most authentic and significant examples of the extraordinary urban civilization which developed in the Arabia Felix in the 2nd century B.C" (Soltanzadeh and Moghaddam 2015, p. 56). Archaeological evidence suggests that "the first humans migrated to Yemen some 40,000 years ago" (Colburn 2002, p. 11).

According to various studies (Ghanem and Al-Hidabi 1993; Al-Amri et al. 2003; Mashhur et al. 2005; Al-Mutawakel, 2005; Kefaya, 2007; Alim et al. 2007), tribes were early converts to Islam, and Yemen was ruled as part of Arab caliphates and then Ottoman Empire 'Islamic caliphates'. In the nineteenth century, the country was

divided between the Ottoman and the British Empire. The modern history of Yemen began in 1918 when North Yemen gained independence from the Ottoman Empire. From 1918 until 1962, North Yemen was ruled by a *Zaidi 'Shi'a' Imamate*, creating the *Mutawakilite* Kingdom which closed Yemen to the outside world with a strict, insular policy. In September 1962 the Imamate was ousted, and the Arab Republic of Yemen was established. In the other part of the country the British Empire withdrew in October 1967 from what became South Yemen.

2.4 Political and economic turmoil in Yemen

Yemen has faced many development challenges in its modern history. In 1970, the Southern Government adopted a Communist governmental system and the People's Republic of South Yemen was founded. Twenty years on, on 22 May 1990, the Republic of Yemen was created through the unification of south and north Yemen. According to Terrill (2011, p. 25), unification:

was accompanied by both sides' acceptance of a variety of democratic institutions and the development of a multiparty political system that was expected to create opportunities for all Yemenis to work through their political and economic differences.

A new government system was introduced after the merger of the South and North governments. Unfortunately, the 'unity' did not last for long before differences between the various party-political leaders emerged, leading to a civil war in 1994 which lasted about 10 weeks. "In 1994, the conflicts about the distribution of power after the unification of Northern and Southern Yemen (1990) escalated into a civil war" (Jung 2006, p. 19). Little was changed by the war; in terms of the constitution, Yemen remained unified but the pattern of rumbling dissent among the various parties has continued ever since. Since 1990, the country has faced three main political and security challenges, namely the civil war in 1994, the international terrorist group 'al-Qaeda', and the civil and regional war in 2015.

The presence of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has been a particular security challenge. It is known as one of the most dangerous groups in the world and the USA has deemed it "the most dangerous threat to the American homeland" (Clausen 2015, p. 23). Yemen has been considered a favoured location for Al-Qaeda for two reasons. Firstly, the founder Shikha Osama bin Laden was Yemeni/Saudi and immigrated to Saudi Arabia from South Yemen. This has made it easy for Al-Qaeda members to get good support from people in Yemen, particularly from rural areas

where people had previously volunteered to fight in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Secondly, the state is weak and lacks the ability to exercise control over its borders. This allowed many Yemeni and non-Yemeni fighters to find it a safe country with easy access on their return from Afghanistan when the Soviet Union withdrew after 1989. The Yemeni regime made use of some of them during the War of Secession in 1994; “the regime became indebted to some of them, and some developed close ties to the regime’s topmost leader.” (Etheredge 2011, p. 138). However, “the Arab Republic of Yemen tended to be at the margin of international attention” (Jung 2006, p. 19) until the suicide attack on the destroyer USS Cole in October 2000. The security of the state has become threatened as has the security of the citizens, which has led to the closing down of many international investments and development projects. This in turn has resulted in increased unemployment and people leaving rural areas “due to lack of basic services” (Al-Sharafi and Dhande 2019, p. 110).

2.5 Arab Spring Revolution

The Arab Spring is a term used to describe popular movements against oppressive regimes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region following an incident in Tunisia in December 2010. “An unemployed graduate named Mohamad Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest against police harassment” (Lewis, A. 2012, p. 1). The news spread to the rest of the Arab countries particularly Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria where it fuelled existing anger and unrest. The underlying causes of this anger were the weakness of the economy and significant rises in unemployment, poverty and the cost of living for the majority of citizens. In the beginning of the protest, people demonstrated peacefully and called for “greater political and economic freedom and representation and the end of corrupt and authoritarian regimes” (O’Sullivan, Rey and Mendez 2011, p. 1). Unfortunately, the demands of the people were suppressed by violence and arrests of demonstrators, which led to intense public anger and violence. The demonstrators then sought to bring down the current regimes and try to replace them with civilian democratic regimes.

In Yemen, a demonstration by students took place at Sana’a University square on 18 January 2011 and spread to other cities in the country. As a result of pressure from the people, the President resigned, a “resignation of honour” after “three decades in power” (Jones 2011, p. 902). Some scholars such as Clausen (2015) and Carapico (2015) referred to the Yemen uprising as a peaceful movement, at least in the first

year. However, the situation in Yemen did not improve and escalated into full-blown civil war in March 2015. According to the Arab Human Development Report (UNDP 2016a, p. 129) the war left “more than 1.8 million school aged children with no access to school with more than 3,500 schools, a quarter of all schools, shut down and some 600,000 children unable to take their exams”.

The Ministry of Education report, Midterm Results Framework (MTRF), states that the protests against the Government resulted in “loss of faith in a State that is increasingly seen as incapable of meeting the pressing social and economic need of the population” (2013-2015, p. 17). Another assessment of the harm caused by the revolution can be seen in the UNDP Human Development Index; in terms of human development, in 2016 Yemen was ranked as number 168 out of 188 countries and UN-recognised territories (UNDP 2016b, p. 200). This was four places lower than in 2010. The index measures human development progress in terms of life expectancy, years of schooling and income (UNDP 2016b, p. 18).

2.6 Women in Yemen

Many women had participated in the Arab Spring revolution, side by side with men. According to *SaferWorld* report (May 2012), “the key role women played in the protests was remarkable, particularly in the first few months, before political parties and military elites seized the momentum of the protests for their own political ends” (p.1). Once the war started in 2015, their role was ignored until - with support from UN Women - 45 women activists gathered in Cyprus on 11 October 2015 during a UN-organised meeting with UN Special Envoy for Yemen to stress the importance of involving them in peace negotiations. As a result, “the gathering also led to the formation of the Yemeni Women Pact for Peace and Security, whose aim was increased women’s participation in formal peacebuilding processes” (Anderlini et al. 2017, p. 5). However, the World Economic Forum (WEF) gender equality index has consistently ranked Yemen at the lowest level, number 144 out of 144 countries in the 2017 report. Contributing factors include low income and poverty, high population growth and poor quality of health services (WEF 2017, pp. 8, 342). A further assessment notes that:

women are faced with very serious constraints ... they have very limited access to assets and are largely excluded from markets. They show higher illiteracy rates and lower primary school enrolment rates than men. Yemeni women do not fare well in other dimensions of life either: their movements are restricted, particularly

with respect to leaving their villages; they have very limited control over fertility and have limited access to decision making both at the household level and in public affairs (IFAD 2007, p. 4).

In *Changes Ahead: Yemeni Women Map the Road to Peace* (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) 2018), it is clear that whilst Yemen had accepted recommendations aimed at improving women's political representation at every level, women's representation in government was lower than before and no plans had been developed to improve participation, although the President renewed earlier commitment to 30% quota (pp. 22-23). Ten years previously, it was reported in *Women Development Strategy 2006-2015* (Women National Committee (WNC) 2008, p. 24) that the contribution of governmental bodies established to address women's issues had not been "positively received or reflected in the executive reality". Although the WNC was set up under the Supreme Council of Women Affairs to ensure the inclusion of women's issues in mainstream development plans, few were included in the first year and there was a lack of financing for implementation. Some women's directorates existed on paper but had no offices or staff, while others existed but had no involvement in the development of policy or programmes (Women National Committee 2008, p. 24). Against this background, the WNC highlighted the need for commitment to "gender-budgeting and development of monitoring and evaluation measures"; simply writing words and numbers in plans would change nothing (Women National Committee 2008, p. 32). The independent evaluation report of the International Labor Organization (ILO) project *Promoting Decent Work and Gender Equality in Yemen 2006-2008* (Khalidi 2009) stated that it had set up "a media platform and watch-dog to monitor the image of working women" (p. 6) and had trained around 20,000 workers, of whom some 39% were women, in their rights and responsibilities under Yemen employment law (p. 5). The issue of integration into national policies and programmes was raised, although this was seen mainly as dependent on future funding to sustain development (p. 6). It is clear that women's political participation has not been promoted or facilitated as a choice.

Moreover, women's participation in the labour force, excluding production which is mainly consumed within their own household or wider family, is noticeably low at around 6% when compared with other Arab states and the regional average of 20.5% (ILO 2015).

2.7 Education and women in Yemen

Badran (1998, p. 502) indicates that, by law, women in South Yemen had equal rights with men as set out in the constitution of 1978. Article 36 reads:

The state shall ensure equal rights for men and women in all fields of life, the political, the economic and social, and shall provide the necessary conditions for the realization of that equality.

However, Noman (1995, p. 1) asserts that during the British occupation of South Yemen, “education was almost non-existent outside the capital, Aden”. In the northern part of Yemen, the only education for both sexes had been at Islamic schools '*al ma'laamah*' or '*Madrasat Tahfiz al Quran*'. The first school for girls opened in 1950, although the majority of the population remained illiterate as late as 1985 with about 98 percent being female. Whilst literacy classes were available in towns, rural female illiteracy was estimated at over 90 percent. Following unification in 1990, data demonstrates that “school attendance in relation to the total age group remained low, especially for girls” (Riphenbur 2008, pp. 717-721). Ten years later, the situation remained low. In 2009, national reports on Adult Education Programmes indicated that women represented 71% of the total number of illiterate individuals in Yemen, with the illiteracy rate twice as high in rural compared with urban areas. At the government level, the weakness of the economy inhibited the ability of the state to provide enough female teachers and good quality schools for girls in a country where mixed schooling was culturally unacceptable (MoE 2009, p. 9). The Arab Human Development Report (UNDP 2009) attributed the high rate of illiteracy among Yemeni women to cultural, social and economic factors. The complexity of the reasons is illuminated by a 2017 newspaper article reporting the death in Taiz of a woman who advocated for female literacy (Independent, 6 January 2017). She was shot, possibly for her activism and possibly also for her family links with a Houthi rebel leader, three months after an Islamic scholar had issued a religious edict (fatwa) banning women activists from mixing with men. Family connections and strict imposition of traditional cultural values can prevail even in the middle of a civil war.

2.8 Impact of Arab Spring on education

As with many other services, the education sector has been affected by the Arab Spring revolution. The Ministry of Education Mid-term report (2013-2015) indicates that, “since the beginning of the crisis, about 810 schools have been severely damaged by the armed conflict, with some buildings completely destroyed” (2013, p. 18).

In terms of the level of illiteracy among women, the Yemeni Women's Situation Report issued by the National Women Committee, Supreme Women Council (2013, p. 16) illuminates the situation of girls as compared to boys. According to the report, 60% of 10-year-old girls are illiterate as compared to 21% of boys of the same age. In terms of gender equality, the same report shows that the gender inequalities in basic education are high; the enrolment rate of girls is 65% for basic education (6-14) years, compared with 84% of boys, a gender gap 19% in favour of males. The basic education dropout rate of girls is estimated to be 12.77% compared to 9.88% of boys.

In similar vein, the 2013 Yemen National Health and Demographic Survey (Central Statistical Organization 2013) found that “more than 2 in 5 Yemeni women have had no education. An additional 37% have attended school at the fundamental level and 15% have gone to secondary school. A small percentage (6%) of women in Yemen have attended higher education” (2013, p. 2) as presented in Figure 2.2. As a result, the low proportion of educated women might constitute a barrier to women’s participation in meaningful national economic activities and contribute to increased poverty levels in the country. Non-formal education could play a significant role in supporting women and giving them the capacity to become active players within their families, local community, and at the national level. The reasons behind the high level of illiteracy among women, including lack of access to higher education, are explained in the Ministry of Education Mid-term report (2013-2015) that linked the difficulties to:

structural challenges including lack of school buildings; lack of teachers in remote areas, where communities live in scattered settlements; poorly trained and uncommitted teachers; absence of female teachers in rural areas; and low awareness of the importance of education within communities, especially those living in remote areas and within marginalized groups. (p.21)

The report also identified similar reasons behind the educational gender gap, even though the report stated that in the country’s development plans, education was a priority and for all (MoE 2015, p. 10).

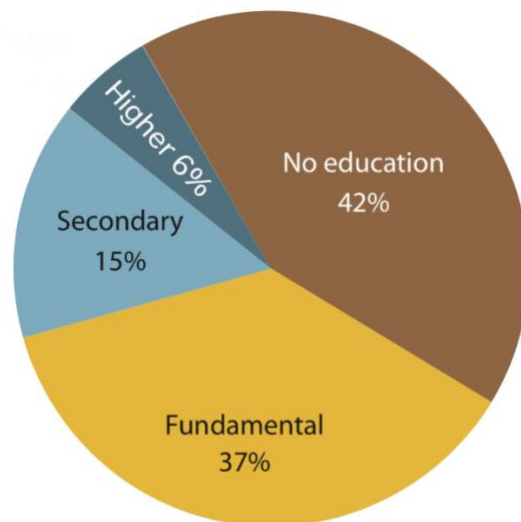


Figure 2-2 Educational attainment of women in Yemen

Source: Yemen National Health and Demographic Survey 2013, p. 2

For this reason, many international development organisations have been working for many years to support the government to reduce poverty and illiteracy in Yemen. Although several IDOs continue to participate in educational improvement and poverty reduction projects, the situation has yet to improve. The international community, including the UN and other development agencies, have heavily supported people in Yemen after the Arab spring revolution as “more than 80 percent is suffering because of the serious shortages of food, fuel and medicines” and “United Nations has declared Yemen a humanitarian crisis equal to that of Syria” (Rugh 2015, p. 151). However, the success of IDOs’ work and international aid depends on how aid is used to benefit local communities; “aid may be channelled to beneficial uses including positive political and economic reforms” (Dutta et al. 2019, p. 208). In the case of Yemen, the long-term impact of moving from dictatorship regime to a more democratic and liberal regime, if that is the direction taken, might help people of Yemen to move gradually out of a poverty trap to a more stable economic condition. It has been argued that a liberal regime “might be more successful in poverty reduction” (Jia 2019, p. 24).

2.9 Overview of IDO education and development initiatives in Yemen

The multiple supports that IDOs provide to many low-income countries in general and to fragile countries in particular have played an important role; these supports include education facilities along with infrastructure development and introduction of

technology (Lilja and Höglund 2018). In many of the fragile states, IDOs are actively working and providing the essentials of life to the people in need of help. They are providing those sensitive states with financial aid such as food, clothing, and shelter also with education and healthcare facilities and equipment and treatments (Mundy and Verger 2015). Western colonial powers are deemed to hold some responsibility for the numerous challenges faced by many underdeveloped and unstable countries (Call 2011).

In Yemen, a succession of varied development programmes has been introduced by IDOs over more than four decades (Lilja and Höglund, 2018; Manyena and Gordon, 2015). Programmes and projects have covered almost every field of development over the last forty years: clean water and sanitation, infrastructure such as roads, education, health, housing, income, nutritious food, and security. Much of the failure to make more progress can be attributed to human-made disasters which range from severe depletion of water resources which reduces food production, through floods and cholera, to recurring periods of civil unrest and the destruction of schools and other civil infrastructure. However, the sheer number of organisations involved must have caused difficulties at times in coordinating activities despite the existence of a central Ministry, now named the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. More than fifteen UN organisations and departments have been involved, together with numerous international development and relief agencies. The UN agencies include: UNDP (United Nations Development Program), IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), UNFPA (United Nations Fund for Population Activities), UNHCR (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees), WFP (World Food Program), WHO (World Health Organization), UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund), and ILO (International Labour Organization). Some are more concerned with coordination of programmes and projects or the safety of staff, such as UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS), OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), UNOPS (United Nations Office for Project Services), UNDSS (United Nations Department of Safety and Security), and DPA (Department of Political Affairs).

Coordination and communication are likely to have been made more difficult by the involvement of many other organisations in the delivery of projects, as main

programme and project providers, intermediary bodies or as providers of humanitarian relief. Examples include United States Agency for International Development (USAID), British Development for International Development (DFID), German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), Islamic Relief, International Relief, Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) and Save The Children.

In 2005, the WHO undertook an evaluation of the Basic Development Needs Programme (BDNP) of Yemen (Mufadal et al. 2005). The evaluation covered various initiatives from 2000 and, although only one of many programmes to have been implemented in Yemen, its scope was vast. The strategy underpinning BDNP aimed to improve the quality of life for people, with a main goal of the achievement of health for all. The process for achieving this was based on active community participation which stimulates self-reliant communities and individuals. The programme extended over 9 governates and 12 districts. At the time the evaluation was conducted, one area in Dhamar was excluded for security reasons and one project in Hadramaut was considered to have started too recently to be included in the evaluation. Almost all development projects, especially ones as large as the BDNP, are conducted with partners. BDNP partners are shown in Table 2.1 which indicates how different countries and organisations were involved in delivering various strands of the programme.

Table 2-1 Programme and Project Partners

Partner	Nature of the contribution
BDN Community	Financial and material
WHO, Ministry of Public Health and Population	Technical and financial
Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)	Financial support for education
WHO Regional Centre for Environmental Health Activities (CEHA)	Technical and financial support for sanitation
Netherlands Development organisation (SNV)	Vocational training
World Bank	Technical and financial support for water supply and sanitation in rural areas

Source: Adopted from WHO (2005, p. 19)

Focusing specifically on the education component of the BNDP, this consisted of support to schools and adult literacy with an emphasis on women's access to education. Literacy in this context means a great deal, particularly to children who leave school early and lose their chance to participate effectively in modern society. According to Power, who notes that extreme poverty affects some 1.4 billion people globally (2015, p. 15):

Millions of innocent adults and children who have not been empowered by education are today the victims of conflict and tyranny, exploitation and violence, malnutrition, preventable diseases, inadequate sanitation and polluted water supplies.

In this context, adult literacy is important in meeting basic learning needs of those who had no access to formal education in their early years. Adult education is not limited to literacy but also provides an effective way of educating people in knowledge and skills that could help to generate many economic and social benefits such as gaining employment and income stability and improving their health and happiness. For Power, education for girls and young women is vital and "the higher the education and skill level of the mother, the more likely it is that her children will stay on to complete their formal education and perform well at school and in life" (2015, p. 12).

In September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders "made a commitment to take collective responsibility for halving world poverty by 2015" (Kabeer 2003, p. xiii). The President of Yemen at that time, Ali Salah, demonstrated the country commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were later reflected in all government and non-government policies and plans with a deadline of 2015. Along with the reduction of poverty and hunger, the MDGs had specific targets for reducing disease, environmental degradation, illiteracy, and discrimination against women by 2015 (Al-Sharafi and Dhande 2019, p. 100). A 2010 report, The Second National Millennium Development Goals Report (MOPIC 2010), examined progress towards achievement of those goals. According to the report, regarding education, primary enrolment had increased from 52.7% to 62.5% between 1990 and 2004, since when the National Strategy for Development of Basic Education had been implemented to increase the rate of progress. However, fewer girls than boys were continuing to the fifth grade (64.7% compared with 75.5%). The same report identified the barriers to more rapid progress towards meeting the goal of basic education for all as: a lack of teachers, both male and female, child labour and a

widespread lack of awareness of the benefits of education in some of the lower income districts. According to the report, “Illiteracy among females in the rural areas accounts for 71.7% in 2004 which is almost double that in the urban areas (36%)” (MOPIC 2010, p. 20).

The MOPIC (2010) report confirmed that the Government of Yemen had established the National Women Committee to ensure gender equality and empower women. However, the report indicated that “the situation is improving compared to the previous period and the road is still long to bridge the gender gap.” (p. 19). This is because the gap was very large and was associated with the cultural traditions of early marriage and the place of education in a girl’s life, together with girls’ role in farming in impoverished rural communities. Outside of farming, women’s participation in economic activity was low, whilst within farming, they were contributing more to agriculture and livestock breeding as well as to household chores and childcare. Women in rural areas without adequate infrastructure had to also walk a long way and under difficult circumstances to collect water and firewood (MOPIC 2010).

Other major initiatives that address skills and human capital, particularly in view of the problem of youth unemployment, which has increased with the high birth rate and population growth, include the ILO project ‘Integrated support for young women and men in Yemen to access decent work’. This was aimed at increasing the capacity of skills training providers and business development service providers so that they in turn could improve employability and entrepreneurship among young women and men.

The ILO also undertook implementation of the National Woman Employment Strategy (2001-2011) and a Policy Advocacy Network for Women Workers in the Health, Education and Agricultural sectors which made more than 20,000 women and men workers aware of their rights to decent work and the role and importance of gender equality (ILO no date). Positive perceptions of women workers were also encouraged in the media (ILO 2008). Since September 2013, the ILO has contributed towards training thirty-five Technical Vocational Education and Training apprenticeship instructors; 30% of these instructors are women. A number of projects are also aimed at developing free enterprises, enhancing growth and continuity of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and developing capacity for delivery of entrepreneurship education, with a particular focus on women through the ‘Women Entrepreneurship

Development Programme'. Working together with the Social Fund, the Know About Business (KAB) training package is being added to national technical and vocational education and universities' curricula.

Despite the government efforts alongside international development aid, in the conclusions of an assessment of Achieving the MDGs by 2015 in Yemen, it was noted that:

Yemen will not reach the targets for the MDGs that are covered by our analysis: poverty, primary education, under-five mortality, water, and sanitation. At the time when this is written, in late 2011, a severe political crisis has pushed policies for development to the background (Al-Batuly et al. 2012, p. 36).

There were some achievements in some sectors but these “did not meet the required level” (Al-Sharafi and Dhande 2019, p. 100). For some, the explanation is that the goals were not realistic and “were formulated in a manner that made it particularly difficult for low-income countries to achieve them” (Al-Batuly et al. 2012, p. 37).

Since the ongoing armed conflict in the country, efforts from 2016 onwards have been largely focused on peace education and mediation skills in secondary schools, training teachers who can in turn give these skills to students (<https://www.sfcg.org/yemen-peace-education/>). Funding has come from the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, and the UK's Conflict Stability and Security Fund, among other sources. USAID has revived another similar peace-building project which was temporarily halted in 2015.

To sum up, despite the involvement of more than thirty organisations and multiple partnerships in Yemen over more than forty years, progress has repeatedly been hindered by human-made disasters. Whilst primary and secondary school enrolment rates increased, progress towards MDGs was painfully slow. Illiteracy and employment rates among rural women remained stubbornly high. This has been associated with a lack of schools and female teachers for girls and with cultural traditions of early marriage, the role of women in farming communities and the role of education in a girl's life.

The following section explains the background and work of IFAD in Yemen and justifies why it was chosen for the present research.

2.10 The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

IFAD operates in Yemen as one of the specialised UN agencies (Figure 2.3) operating under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which is one of the six main divisions of the United Nations organisation. It works alongside various specialized agencies and affiliated organizations. with a remit for poverty reduction through agricultural development. “IFAD should take advantage of its privileged position as the Government of Yemen’s main development partner in rural poverty alleviation and play a more prominent role in policy dialogue on key rural development issues” (Independent Office of Evaluation 2012, p. ix). Ecker (2014) states that these include establishing and strengthening:

community organisations to engage in the project’s participatory development processes; adult literacy classes and life-skills training predominantly for women; and construction of community infrastructure for safe drinking water, education, health, and transportation (Ecker 2014, p. 3).

IFAD was created as one of the major initiatives of the World Food Conference, held in Rome in 1974, following two years of negotiations which resulted in establishment of the fund. Ninety-one governments adopted the agreement to establish the fund, which was opened in December 1976, after initial pledges totalling \$1 billion were received. The agreement came into force on 30 November 1977 through the coordinating machinery of the United Nations Economic and Social Council acting under Articles 57 and 63 of the United Nations Charter (UN 1945).

IFAD is focused exclusively on agricultural development, concentrating on the poorest sections of the rural populations in developing countries. IFAD focuses on country-specific needs to support poor people in order to earn better income and improved food security (Corbett 2009, p. 2). Its projects and programmes are carried out in remote and environmentally fragile locations involving all aspects of agriculture, including crops, irrigation, agricultural credit, storage, livestock, and fisheries. Moreover, IFAD states that it pays special attention to empowering women in order to develop gender equality at every level. The gender equality and women empowerment policy declares that:

Since its foundation in 1978, IFAD has increasingly made overcoming gender inequalities and empowering women a cornerstone of its work to reduce rural poverty and food insecurity. Addressing gender issues is central to delivering on all policies and strategic frameworks in IFAD (IFAD 2012a, p. iii).

The combination of poverty alleviation, school construction and focus on gender equality in rural areas, together with long experience in the country, means that IFAD is in a good position to address some of the key issues faced by poorly educated Yemeni women living in such areas. The fact that the organisation has more intimate knowledge of, and a further reach into, rural communities than other IDOs and the Ministry of Education is the main reason for choosing to concentrate on IFAD in this study.

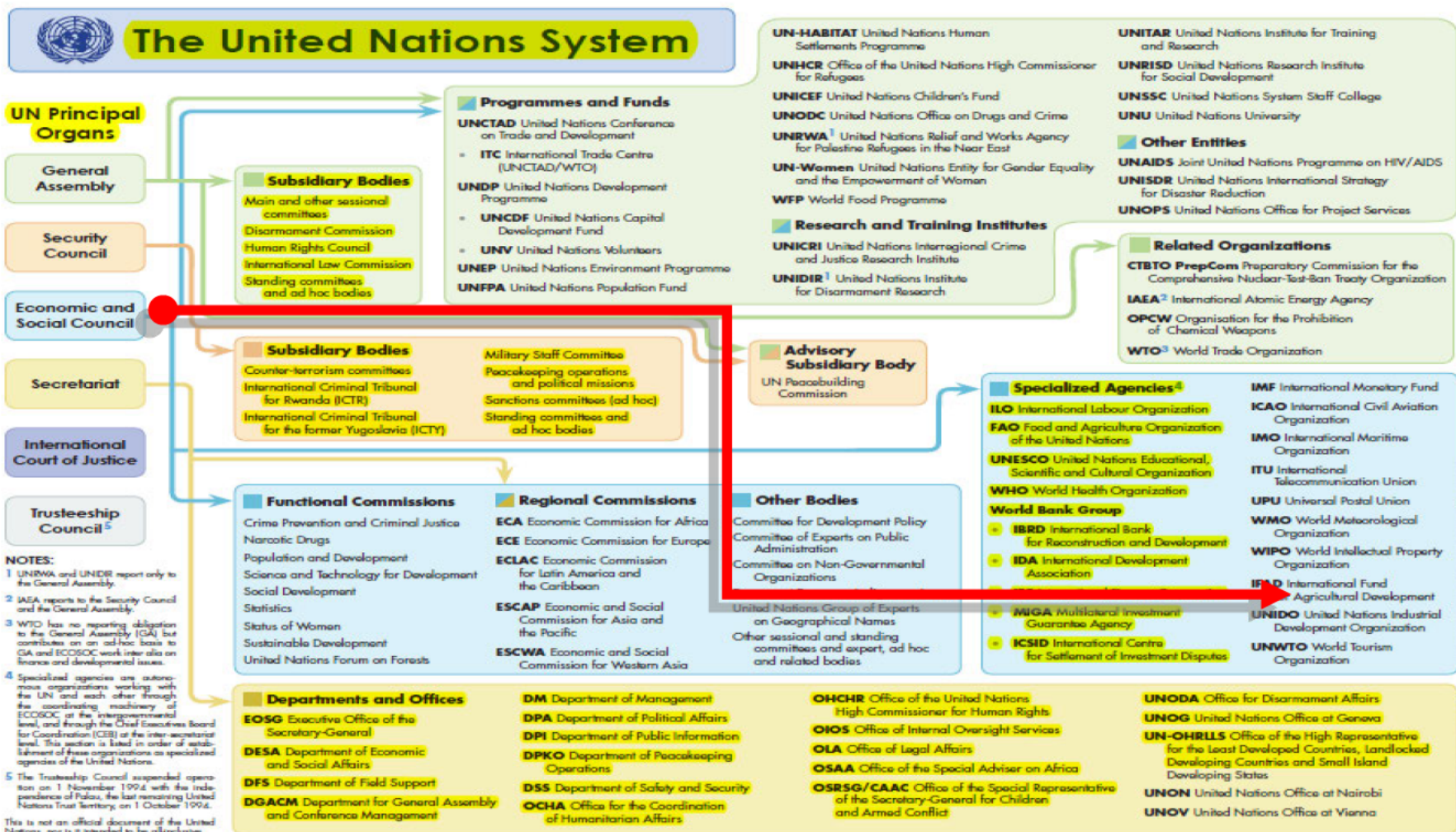


Figure 2-3 UN and its agencies

Source: http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/structure/pdfs/un_system_chart_colour_sm.pdf

Key: Red arrow shows the relationship between the UN Economic and Social Council and IFAD

2.11 IFAD in Yemen

IFAD started its operations in Yemen in 1979 and has financed about 21 development programmes and projects in the country; Yemen is the “3rd largest recipient of IFAD’s resources in terms of loans and grants” after Sudan and Egypt (IFAD 2011b, p. 1).

IFAD focuses its initiatives on six Governorates of Yemen, namely Abyan, Amran, Al Hudaydah, Dhamar, Lahj and Sana’a (Figure 5.1). According to IFAD these areas are poorest, most marginalized parts of the country, particularly in remote coastal areas and rugged, mountainous zones (IFAD 2012b). As mentioned earlier, one of the primary aims of IFAD is gender equality and empowering women as a way to support their families and communities. Hartl (2006, p. 4) states:

Literacy, numeracy and health awareness programmes for adults can translate into more educated and capable parents, with positive implications for other family members. A high proportion of IFAD supported projects include adult literacy, specifically directed at women.

In terms of cultural identities, IFAD policy implies that their work is organised and implemented in a partnership with local communities and gives grassroots people special attention to protect their cultural identities. For IFAD (2007), targeted groups who participate in the development programmes and activities need to understand the reasons behind their challenges and difficulties. This level of understanding is considered crucial in order to be able to identify the conditions they need to improve their lives through educational programmes and skills for life activities. In the traditional, conservative, rural communities in Yemen, this approach risks perpetuating the status quo if women’s ‘cultural identities’ are protected. It also risks national or local objection to (or withdrawal from) a programme or activities if women start to challenge the status quo after they understand the reasons behind their difficulties. Thus IFAD’s statements may be aspirational rather than capable of practical implementation.

2.12 Conclusion

In summary, Yemen has a historic and strategic importance in the region which is however overshadowed by the multiple challenges faced by the country before and after unification in 1990. This situation has impacted negatively and directly on people’s lives, particularly marginalised groups such as girls and women in rural areas.

The chapter has painted a picture of a state unable to meet the basic needs of its people, facing considerable challenges to its border security in addition to continuing economic and political turmoil. Women are particularly disadvantaged in terms of education, political participation and paid employment in a country which was ranked lowest in the 2017 WEF gender equality index.

IFAD states a commitment to improving the situation and participation of women through its agricultural development programmes and projects. One of these, in the mountainous region of Dhamar, forms the focus of this study. This chapter has set the context for the research and also for the personal perspective on the situation offered in my autoethnographic account of life, education and work as a Yemeni woman (Chapter 6).

Chapter 3 Education and development

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses findings from the literature regarding the nature and theoretical underpinnings of education and development in international agency programmes of work. It begins with a review of the only three studies in Arabic that are relevant to the present study in Yemen, obtained either through the publisher or by personal contact with the author; these illustrate the gap in research regarding the themes of education, development and women in Yemen. There follows a review of a selection of relevant literature to examine differing interpretations of the nature of education and development in international agency programmes of work, highlighting the differences and the theories that underpin them. Specific consideration is given to fragile contexts such as Yemen within which international development programmes operate, before the chapter concludes with a summary of the main points.

According to Wellington (2015, p. 55), reviewing literature is a way of “reminding ourselves that we need to find out what is already ‘known’ in our area of research, what’s been done before and, just as important, how it’s been done”. In this context there is a range of purposes for reviewing the literature, as highlighted by Wellington. It is essential to help a researcher situate the study within the wider body of knowledge and expand a theoretical rationale. It assists in assuring a sound base of knowledge and theory and a thorough awareness and understanding of current work (Ridley 2012, p. 1) which helps researchers to position their own work on “the academic map of knowledge creation” and identify “connections with the work of others”. Moreover, as Wellington (2015, p. 56) proposed, it relates to other key aspects of the research, namely “formulating of research questions, framing and design of a study, the methodology and methods, the data analysis, and the final conclusions and recommendations”.

3.2. Education, development and women in Yemen

Aqlan (2010) conducted research on basic education in Yemen from a gender perspective focusing on rural areas, with the aim of identifying the reasons underlying the high drop-out rates among girls and the totally inadequate number of available female teachers in rural areas. The study highlighted the gap between government

policy and its effective implementation. Strategies to reform the education sector with the particular focus on girls had been mapped out in the National Strategy for Basic Education Development in the Republic of Yemen 2003-2015 and the National Strategy for Girls Education in the Republic of Yemen 1996-2010. These had three main objectives of which the first was to provide basic education opportunities for girls aged 6-14 years in order to double their enrolment rate from approximately 40% in 1997/1998 to 80% in 2010. The second was to lower the high drop-out rates among girls. The third was to improve the quality of education for girls through developing programmes and activities to meet their practical needs and make education for them useful, socially and economically, at the individual level, as well as for the family and community as a whole.

Aqlan (2010) reported that an overall increase in basic education enrolment rates accompanied by a reduction in the gender gap between girls and boys was no guarantee that girls would continue their education after a certain point in time. He overwhelmingly attributed the disparity to cultural norms. For Aqlan, in conservative societies such as Yemen, the presence of female teachers in schools was of great value as it encouraged girls to enrol and continue their education, even in Haydan in the Sada region where schools had closed. Where female teachers were available in rural areas, they played a positive and significant role in raising enrolment rates. The strongest factors discouraging women from becoming teachers in rural areas were considered to be financial challenges arising from insufficient government budget allocations and socio-cultural challenges. The same factors were considered responsible for the low level of girls' participation in education. High drop-out rates and low enrolment rates of girls were to be attributed not so much to parental non-compliance or the unavailability of schools for girls (which was in itself a problem), but rather to the lack of appropriate cultural conditions in rural Yemeni society. Among the main cultural barriers were early marriage and concerns regarding the safety of girls. The study recommended that the government should: review the education budget from the perspective of gender; demand better coordination between the relevant sectors and international donors; and encourage urban female teachers to move to rural areas by providing adequate transportation and financial incentives. Whilst this study was helpful in terms of reviewing the government's policies and strategies, it accepted the custom of early marriage without question. It also paid relatively little attention to the role of local and international NGOs in promoting development and

education for women. Moreover, the role and involvement of mothers in supporting girls' education in rural areas was not directly addressed, possibly because it would have been too contentious. As OECD (2015) noted, efforts in 2008 to introduce a quota of 15 percent for women in parliament ended abruptly following a 'Meeting for Protecting Virtue and Fighting Vice' organised by Islamic clerics and heads of tribes. It was declared that a woman's place was in her home and unaccompanied women began to be challenged on the street.

Saif (2013) also sought to identify problems and areas for improvement in education in addition to health. The findings of his research were directly presented to women at the Sixth Women's National Conference (6-7 April 2013) in Sana'a. Government documents and statistics were used to identify four significant areas of shortfall, namely: inadequate attention to the training of local service providers, lack of government funding for local services, limited health services in rural areas, and the high rate of illiteracy among females in rural areas on account of high drop-out rates due to social conventions. In contrast to Aqlan (2010), the safety of girls was not highlighted. However, the World Bank report (2012, p. 169) concurred with Aqlan, noting that "In Yemen, restrictions on school attendance for girls were related more to safety than to social norms", although it is not clear whether safety was related to issues of gender violence, moral policing or a combination of factors. Like Aqlan, Saif's research did not give attention to the role of donors and NGOs in supporting the government's budget and providing educational activities for rural areas.

One study specifically examined the impact of international development on Yemeni society, although the role of international development organisations was again given little consideration. Ateeq (2013) offered a critical analysis of the development situation in Yemen since 1990, with particular focus on social development, taking into account political and social obstacles and issues such as poverty and the availability of social services. As with the other studies, research was based on documents and government statistics. Ateeq identified failure to make sufficient progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to poverty, education and health. These were to: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (United Nations 2015, pp.4-7). He did not address the remaining two goals

which were to ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development (United Nations 2015, pp.6-7).

Failure was attributed by Ateeq to three main factors: political instability; the weakness of the state in controlling its borders; and corruption. It was suggested that the state was directing the largest percentage of the budget, which was already weak compared with many other countries, to the military services, with the subsequent negative impact on the implementation of development policies and plans. The role of donors and international development organisations was seen as hindering rather than advancing progress. Indeed, the suggestion was mooted that the State rescind foreign aid and support and rely instead on natural resources and local investment to meet the needs of the people. Ateeq argued that it was the sole responsibility of the State to resolve social and developmental problems through the provision of community awareness programmes in the important task of achieving development goals. Whilst highlighting the difficulties in the political situation and the possibility that international development could allow a government to avoid some of its responsibilities towards its citizens, this study failed to take sufficient account of gender. The lack of consideration of the role of IDOs is, to a certain extent, compensated for by reports from agencies themselves.

3.3. Education and development in international agency programmes of work

3.3.1 Understandings of education and development

Long before languages began to be written down, knowledge and skills were passed on orally from generation to generation. This oral tradition can still be found in relatively isolated communities today, such as pastoralists, pearl divers and those dependent on agriculture, among others, where practical skills dominate. In isolated rural communities in Yemen, where there are few schools and attendance is poor, an oral tradition may be the only available option for some children. The issue of education has been central to human development certainly since classical times, as thinkers, politicians and economists have given special attention to the purposes of education as well as the form of schooling it should take, since they consider it to be one of the important tools for guiding and preparing people for change and advancing society (Noddings 1995). Accordingly, as human society has undergone many

transformational stages, including industrial society and knowledge society, the term 'education' has had different meanings attached to it, depending on the purpose it serves for a particular society or agency at a particular time.

In Yemen, the establishment of an education system outside of traditional Qur'an schools has been difficult and interrupted by conflicts. The principle of school for all was established in 1962; before then, with very few exceptions, education for girls (if they were fortunate enough to receive any education) consisted of learning basic Arabic reading and writing alongside the Qur'an in female-run Islamic schools in homes or mosques. From 1991 to 2004, primary school enrolment rates for girls doubled from less than 30% to just over 60% (databank.worldbank.org). Following the introduction of the national Basic Education Development Strategy 2003–2015, it was reported in 2013 that the primary school enrolment rate for girls had risen to almost 73%, compared with just over 90% for boys (Ministry of Education 2013). However, the secondary school enrolment rate for girls was 31% and 48% for boys (World Economic Forum 2013). This raises questions about the purpose the education system serves in Yemen and a thorough search of the strategy for any stated objectives of education yielded no results.

Carr (2005, p. 12) argues that education is "clearly both more and less than equipping young people with the knowledge, understanding and skills that may be useful (vocationally, healthfully or therapeutically) to them in adult life". Coates (1994, p. 86) defines education more specifically in relation to change within the individual and society as "the opportunity to grow, to develop, to enhance one's understanding and, possibly, one's place in the world". Tyler (1949, pp. 5-6) defined the core of education as "a process of changing the behaviour patterns of people", while Dewey (2004, p. 28), first published in 1916, described education as "that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience". There is an emphasis on education as process within these definitions, although in practice the emphasis may be on the product in the sense of what is learned. Overemphasis on the product was heavily criticised by Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in English in 1970. He saw students being treated as receptacles who were to be filled as full as possible with knowledge possessed by teachers. He stated that education "transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action,

leads men and women to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power” (2000, p. 77). In the words of Carr (2005, p.3), these definitions confirm that “the concept of education is essentially contested”.

The same has been said of development; it has been noted by Sen (1988, p. 23) that “the concept of development is by no means unproblematic”. As with education, the theory and practice of development has changed over time, reflecting changes in political beliefs and the international environment. Development involves many important variables, such as political, social, cultural and religious factors, and, more recently, gender and environmental factors. However, it has always been strongly influenced by economics and economic theory. Although from early times nations had been ‘developing’ other nations they conquered and colonised, for example Roman sanitation and engineering, or British education and administration systems, international development really emerged as a separate field after the second World War. In the period 1944 to 1957, many organisations were created to assist the rebuilding of Europe and later to assist former European colonies as they became independent, in addition to looking more broadly at security worldwide. These organisations included the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the United Nations (UN) and its agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The original aim was to create functioning, liberal market economies and create order in the reconstruction and development of economic, political and social systems after the war. Modernisation was driven by the United States and, as Europe recovered, by European nations and was therefore built on the systems which had evolved over the previous two hundred years and been spread through colonisation to other continents (Eisenstadt 1966).

Modernisation theory was greatly influenced by the idea that development of a country was held back by traditional values but encouraged and produced by economic growth and industrialisation (Rostow 1990). Countries with little or no industrialisation or economic growth were considered ‘underdeveloped’, or perhaps less offensively but equally patronising, ‘developing’. It was assumed that trade and aid from ‘developed’ countries would create the required economic growth and remove any weaknesses in the production factors of labour, land and capital. Developing countries

would progress along a linear path until they had all the characteristics of developed nations. Benefits from trade would include inflows of capital, while aid could include technology and associated knowledge, managerial skills and experience. Lipset, who is regarded as another seminal writer on modernisation theory, asserted that “the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy” (Lipset 1959, p. 31). However, the relationship between development and democracy is not straightforward and Zakaria (2003) has argued, among others, that authoritarian rule tends to result in more rapid development. The relationship between development, democracy and education is not straightforward either. Education was considered an important factor in enabling more people to share in the wealth created by modernisation, while education as well as wealth was needed to help create the conditions for democracy.

Inspired by the World Bank assessment that failures of economic reform in Africa were attributable to poor governance, many donors and international development organisations incorporated governance into their programmes, with ‘good governance’ often being associated with democracy and with the UK and US leading the way in linking moves towards democracy in countries in receipt of assistance (Gillies 2005). Gillies notes that other reasons for promoting democracy include belief that this will improve efficiency or effectiveness and thus increase return on investment, alignment with the foreign policy of donor countries, and beliefs in human rights. However, research into the relationship between economic growth and democracy has produced conflicting findings. Gillies (2005, p. 22) suggests that democracy may indirectly influence economic growth, with a negative effect when levels of democracy are low and a positive effect when they are high. In contrast, a study by Rachdi and Saidi (2015) which modelled the relationship in 17 MENA countries over a period of thirty years concluded that in those countries, democracy exerted a strong negative influence on economic growth. Economic modelling of the impact of education on GDP growth indicates that national commitment to investment in primary and secondary education in lower income countries produces significant gains (Breton 2012).

It can be said that education is important, whether for economic purposes, for enabling individuals to have more control over their future lives, or for those in power to exert control. It contributes to economic growth to a greater or lesser extent, which in turn

may reduce poverty, subject to political and social conditions. There is a belief that a positive relationship exists between education and democracy, but in developing countries there appears to be a negative relationship between democracy and economic growth. This highlights the importance of understanding and negotiating politico-cultural differences between donor and recipient countries as well as local communities.

3.3.2 Education in international agency programmes of work

In international agency programmes, there has been a heavy emphasis on education for all, in particular on children's access to school, and on formal learning at primary, secondary and, to a lesser extent, post-secondary level. In 2010, learning at unspecified levels accounted for 21% worldwide of the total official development assistance to education, down from 49% in 1995 (Riddell and Niño-Zarazúa 2016). No figure is available for adult literacy which is generally included in the 'unspecified' category or with primary education. Moreover, it is reported that targets for adult literacy, particularly for women, and access to basic adult education were originally discussed but not included in Millennium Development Goals (Robinson 2005). Instead, there are skills-specific programmes or components of programmes which specifically aim to encourage the development of small businesses by offering business training and ongoing technical assistance, often in combination with finance such as micro-credit. Some skills-specific training is directed to practical skills and techniques, for instance agricultural skills. Others are aimed at capacity building for the formation and success of farmer associations or other community organisations. These tend to focus on improving production techniques and management skills. Some programmes are offered in training the trainers, as in the ILO Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Yemen, and in leadership for women, for example, the USAID programme Women in Agribusiness Leadership in Ethiopia.

Thus education in the context of international development can be classified as formal education (primary, secondary and post-secondary), adult education (essentially literacy, numeracy and life skills such as health and nutrition), skills training (practical skills and business skills) and capacity-building (for groups such as farmer associations and community organisations, or for individuals such as leadership programmes). The increase in peace-building initiatives in countries experiencing or emerging from conflict is included for the purposes of this thesis within capacity-

building, on the basis that it seeks to develop individuals' skills and techniques in conflict-handling and mediation, which enhance the capacity of the group or organisation within which the individuals operate.

3.3.3 Poverty, education and women

The focus on the role of development programmes and activities related to women and education in a fragile country context requires a closer look at connections between poverty and the extent and level of education in lower income countries. According to Mihai et al. (2015) there is an important link between poverty and the level of education in the developing countries, which negatively affects the lives of individuals in terms of both access to education and the quality of education they can access:

Most families living in conditions of extreme poverty cannot afford to send one or all of their children to school. Moreover, in many countries, even primary education must be paid, and secondary education is free and compulsory only in developed countries and in some less developed countries (Mihai et al. 2015, p. 856).

Whilst education is deemed important and necessary, it is not available to all, especially to poor families or poor countries including those that suffer from security disturbances or armed conflicts.

Poverty and low income also impact negatively on women's participation in education, as demonstrated in many studies, including Duflo (2012), Bandiera and Natraj (2013) and Balamoune-Lutz and McGillivray (2015). Balamoune-Lutz and McGillivray (2015, p. 2) stated that "gender inequality in education is higher in low-income countries". They based this assertion on economic modelling of data from a number of countries in the Middle East which yielded results showing that lower enrolment of females in primary and secondary education had a statistically significant negative effect on income in lower income countries. They also identified that women's participation in educational activities made them more confident and better able to contribute positively to lowering rates of child mortality and malnutrition. They asserted that since women's participation in education had a direct positive impact on country development, there was an important role for civil society in "raising awareness of the social and economic benefits of female education" (2015, p. 10). They concluded that international development organisations were correct to

concentrate on primary education for all and improving gender equality but did not specifically address the issue of adult female illiteracy.

The economic arguments in favour of women's role in development may, however, simply add to existing expectations of women in impoverished and rural communities. According to Duflo (2012), many women experience time poverty, in the sense that they spend far more time on average than men on childcare and housework. In rural communities in Yemen, women may spend additional hours walking to collect clean water and working in agriculture. Farrell (2014) persuaded first IKEA, then the Yemen Reading Association and subsequently several partners including an NGO implementing a project for IFAD, to provide solar lamps for women in rural areas, although not in the case study location for this thesis. This very practical intervention facilitated women's enrolment in literacy classes and children's completion of homework while giving families a safer supply of light than their existing generators and kerosene lamps. With or without such practical support, illiterate women in rural areas are expected to continue to carry out their daily tasks while undertaking educational activities in order to contribute to national economic development.

Even if women increase family income, they may not benefit directly from this. A 2019 World Bank publication, *Women, Business and the Law*, reported that, on average, in the Middle East and Africa, women were found to have just under half the legal rights enjoyed by men. This finding was based on measurements of: freedom to travel; legislation which affects decisions regarding women's employment before and after having children; pay legislation; legal restrictions regarding marriage; barriers to starting and running a business; property and inheritance rights which affect women's opportunities to manage assets; and pension entitlement. (World Bank 2019, pp. 3-4). According to the Global Findex database (Demirguc-Kunt et al. 2014), 2% of women in Yemen had a bank account compared with 11% of men. Based on my own experience, at the level of individual households, many women are not allowed to have their own bank accounts. If their work earns income, it will be looked after by the male head of the household and spent according to his wishes.

In practical terms this means that even if such women are able to benefit from education, the benefit may be purely theoretical. Sen (1992, p. 44) argues that education is one of "a relatively small number of centrally important beings and doings that are crucial to well-being". It allows an individual to extend the range of things they

wish to do or be, to increase “the substantive freedoms he or she enjoys to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value” (Sen 1999a, p. 87). This is an important component of Sen’s approach to human development, the capability approach, which is examined in Chapter 4. For time-poor women in impoverished rural communities, with limited legal rights and perhaps further restricted by cultural constraints, education may not bring such benefits. Whether it does or not, the underlying expectation is that women’s education will benefit the health and education of the next generation and, by doing so, benefit the country as a whole. This can be interpreted as a continuation of male-dominated discourse. Men have found and articulated a new role for women, which is reflected in the Women in Development (WID) framework inspired by Western, liberal feminist thinking (Pittman 2014) that has underpinned many gender equality and empowerment initiatives for the last forty years. Later frameworks have changed some of the language and placed more emphasis on the rights of women but have retained the connection with modernisation theory and the role of women in enhancing economic growth (Aikman and Unterhalter 2005).

In some societies, traditional culture continues to define women’s role as largely confined to the home, as mother and caregiver, and men’s role as responsible for productive activities outside the home (Ali et al. 2011; El Feki et al. 2017; Al-bakr et al. 2017). Where women are allowed or even expected to work, especially in rural areas, it is typically within a family business such as a farm or shop which means they are unlikely to be paid for their efforts. Development programmes have to find a way of taking into consideration the cultural norms of the country and often the specific region of the country where they are implemented.

This next section examines the role of international development organisations, including the evolving notions of ‘development’ and how these have changed notions of ‘education’ in ways that influenced programming.

3.4 The role of international development organisations

IDO’s interpret and implement development in a variety of ways, although they have all been influenced to a greater or lesser extent by Article 1.1 of the Declaration on the Right to Development which states that:

The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized (Sengupta 2004, p. 180).

The Declaration, which was adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1986, establishes commitments for governments to promote participation and the provision of fundamental rights, which indicate the basic responsibilities of governments for participatory mechanisms in general and NGOs in particular. This Declaration recognised the contribution that NGOs can make to development. The link between development as a process and the development organisations, whether they are local or international, has become a basic mechanism for working with local communities in a participatory way within development projects. Involvement takes the form of working in partnership with a country's central government while not replacing the government's role and responsibilities towards their people. In this context, NGOs have emerged as a mechanism for both economic transformation and for dealing with, and advocating for, marginalised groups (Lewis and Kanji 2009). They may also offer a mechanism for reducing the centralisation of the State, which may be variously seen as helpful or threatening (Gubser 2002). Accordingly, IDOs do not necessarily intervene in the affairs of developing countries all at once but rather through a series of stages over time. This has resulted in NGOs tending to grow more or less organically following their establishment and their visions have been formed as one of the main mechanisms for contributing to development and paying more attention to grassroots communities and their needs, although those in receipt of funding from large foreign donors may be seen as following an agenda that is not in the best interests of their beneficiaries or the state (Banks and Hulme 2012).

3.4.1 Approaches to development

Development as a concept is attached essentially to the work provided by development agencies particularly when discussing its goals. Development can be said to run in two distinct directions: improvement in socio-economic conditions and international social justice (Rist 2007, p. 486). This has led some writers to question the relationship between development and IDOs and the definition of 'development'. For instance, Thomas (2000, pp. 777-778) has expressed concerns that the practices of some development organisations are focused exclusively on reducing poverty, with a tendency for techniques and targets to replace other understandings of

development. The context in which the term 'development' is widely used within the culture of aid often infers some form of sole ownership of the concept or a sense of superiority. It is often used ambiguously when it is attached to the IDOs working predominantly in developing countries. As applied to theory, 'development' is used by social science scholars and economists in many different ways depending on the context of the study. As noted by Hayter (2005, p. 89):

there was little attempt ... to define development. Instead, there was an unquestioned assumption ... that 'development', whatever it was, could lead to improvement in the situation of poor people.

In this respect, development is often evaluated, and progress measured, in terms of per capita income and economic growth. However, achievement of economic growth of a country measured in this way may not take account of the full and necessary development process which is defined by Todaro and Smith (2012, p. 5) as "the process of improving the quality of all human lives and capabilities by raising people's levels of living, self-esteem and freedom".

This definition highlights two important aspects of development: the idea that development is an ongoing process within a framework of interconnected factors, and the idea that the level of freedom must necessarily be raised. The second idea is based on Western assumptions of self-esteem, freedom and democracy and may alienate governments in some countries which are recipients of development programmes. In this context, I have deliberately used the word 'recipient' rather than 'beneficiaries' because Western values are not universal and may not always be seen favourably by some other countries' cultures. Indeed, this has been recognised by some scholars who postulate that economic growth is not necessarily a sign of development, if viewed within the context of human development and the improvement of the lives of individuals. For them, the indicator of economic growth is ephemeral, based upon transitory notions of economic performance, prices, markets and production, while ignoring social and cultural factors (Brinkman and Brinkman 2011). Brinkman and Brinkman based their assertion on "the experience of the 1950s and 1960s, when many developing nations did reach their economic growth targets but the levels of living of the masses of people remained for the most part unchanged" (p. 15).

Resulting from this, there is a strand of thought claiming that development cannot be considered as purely an economic phenomenon but should rather be merged with

social factors where the aim is to improve the quality of human life. From this viewpoint, the core of development should focus on people, namely human progress/human development.

Moreover, what might mean economic development for one country might not mean the same for another. “While conventional wisdom predicts a growth-enhancing effect of trade, recent developments suggest that trade openness is not always beneficial to economic growth” (Zahonogo 2016, p.41). For example, Zahonogo (2016) has highlighted that trade openness needs to be controlled and accompanied by improvements in governance and development of human capital through education and acquisition of new skills. The vision in the UN Declaration on the Right to Development was wider ranging; development “is a comprehensive process, going beyond economics to cover social, cultural and political fields and aiming at “constant improvement”, meaning progressive and regular improvement of well-being” (Sengupta 2004, p. 180).

Whilst there are no universal criteria to define development, various definitions and theories which underpin economic growth and social change have been offered (Willis 2005). In contrast to some scholars, Willis argued that development cannot be defined without looking at the purpose behind each definition. For example, when development is linked to the discussion around economy, then its growth and its positive impact on economic wealth is the main measure of development. Alternatively, development might be linked to the question of individuals’ quality of life. This perspective would require individuals to self-assess any improvement in their quality of life and would acknowledge the importance of the participation of both individuals and communities in setting out a definition of development and how it is evaluated.

A related but more detached definition of development is propounded by Sen (1988) who described it as fulfilling the basic needs of people. These needs include healthcare, education, availability of food, clean water, social security and basic civil rights. In his publications *Poverty and Famines* (1981) and *Development as Freedom* (1999), Sen makes a distinction between development as condition-static and development as a process or course of change, which he deems essential towards achieving ‘social justice’. These works are an important reference in the field of development as they focus the discussion and analysis of developmental projects on

the developing world rather than in the 'developed' world. For example, *Poverty and Famines* created reverberations within governments and international organisations; the net impact was the production of policies with the aim of creating a fair economic system to meet people's needs. Sen argued that social reforms must precede economic reforms in order to achieve economic growth and that these social reforms must include improvements in education and public health. Thus, for Sen and many other scholars including Corbridge (2002), Robeyns (2005), Simon (2006) and Stillman and Denison (2014), development is defined in terms of various human and civil rights that must be guaranteed for all.

Development is an important process to assist low-income countries to 'catch up' with developed countries through the development of economic, political, social and educational systems. In that respect, IDOs are considered to be important allies of these countries to support them in the reform of their own development plans including financial, economic, and educational policies. In addition, these organisations are particularly important because of their substantial role in providing technical and administrative support and financial assistance including grants and loans to the targeted governments. Hence, the concept 'development' should be interpreted within a framework of other factors because development is the end goal of two important dimensions, namely the economic and social. Education is notable in that it plays a significant part in all forms of development and, in lower income countries, it has a strong link to economic development which aims to improve people's quality of life (Preston 1988; Todaro and Smith 2014).

The strands of development thought came together to a certain extent through a series of summits and conferences. On the one hand, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund introduced Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in 1999 as a tool for planning aid, with a continuing emphasis on economic growth including investment in the social sector and on selective commitment to a number of the MDGs (Fukuda-Parr 2011, p. 128). On the other hand, although ul Haq had initiated Human Development Reports in 1990, his strategic aspects such as empowerment were missing in the early PRSPs, and other important elements were also absent, such as pro-poor economic growth based on markets (Gerster 2000) and women's political representation (Fukuda-Parr 2011, p. 128). For example, the second MDG aimed at achieving universal primary education for girls and boys

equally, but it did not reflect the commitments of the Declaration for Action made at the opening of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995 (Eyben 2006). This conference, which attracted 17,000 participants and a further 30,000 activists, included lifelong learning for women in the Declaration and Platform for Action (United Nations 1996).

PSRPs are still required by the World Bank and must describe the country's poverty reduction strategy. Strategies have been classified by Gerster (2000) as: market based pro-poor growth, such as value chain development, improving links between farmers and markets; sustainable livelihoods approach (participatory, people-centred development activities that build social and human capital); resource based, emphasizing redistribution of assets, natural resources such as land, access to water; and infrastructure, for example roads and schools. The production of a PSRP has to satisfy the lenders and donors that their money will be well spent, so the contents specific to women have tended to focus on health, income-generating activities and basic literacy; the plans and objectives drawn up by IFAD show how this was designed to work in practice (Chapter 7).

3.4.1.1 Participatory processes in development

The World Summit Outcome Document (United Nations 2005) confirmed that development is a central goal in its own right and therefore the process as well as the product of development needs to be considered. In terms of the process, it is deemed important to engage local communities from an early stage in development organisations' work. The reasons for involving local community 'beneficiaries' in the development process are twofold: to ensure that beneficiaries share their voice and contribute to the process and project, and to increase the chances of success in meeting project and programme targets. From an early stage, local communities (beneficiaries) should play a role in helping to identify needs and how those needs could best be met. This involvement should continue to the implementation stage. In this way, beneficiaries in the targeted area could be an effective channel of development if they participate equally by sharing their knowledge and responsibilities (Craig 1998; Francis 2001; Kothari 2001; Mohan 2001; Willis 2005). According to Willis, participation can be used for:

the involvement of local people in the actual agenda setting of development organizations. To be fully participatory, the agenda needs to be set by the communities involved, rather than outside agencies deciding on the priorities to

be addressed and then working with local people to achieve them (Willis 2005, p. 104).

This should ensure that the decisions will not be taken by governments or donors in a purely top-down or centralised approach but should actively involve the people who will be beneficiaries in a bottom-up approach. Sen (2001, pp. 53, 80-81) highlights this and adds weight to the importance of “people involvement”. He states:

The people have to be seen ... as being actively involved - given the opportunity - in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs (p. 53).

His view is that the importance of community involvement in the development process is positive and valued. Engagement from the early stage in the development process is important. It could lead, in theory, to the creation of a partnership and ownership model (communities in the rural area as a targeted group) where beneficiaries of development programmes are considered from the outset for their own particular, pertinent needs (such as relevant life skills, leadership, technical and educational activities) and do not bear the brunt of the dead hand of government or donors from above.

Participatory development is closely associated with the empowerment of marginalised women in vulnerable communities, provided that it addresses the issues of power relations between men and women, beginning with men and then tackling institutions (Nawaz 2013). However, not all participatory projects succeed, as reported by Mansuri and Rao (2013). Reasons for failure include: unpredictability of context, erratic development of engagement, inadequate responsive support from state, patchy feedback from facilitators and a failure to report problems and learn from them, together with unrealistic expectations on the part of donors such as The World Bank (Mansuri and Rao 2013, p. 290).

Further reasons may include differences of interpretations of the participation concept among stakeholders. Understandings of participation can range from information sharing through decision making to initiating action (Paul 1987, pp. 4-5; Cornwall 2008). A major co-financing organisation or government department may see information sharing as a necessary or first step towards greater participation whilst a project worker in an NGO may see that local communities can identify needs and address them. Differences in understanding are also related to complex issues of power, control and responsibility at all levels (Bliss and Neumann 2008) and therefore

tensions among stakeholders, including consultants and development workers at different levels, and beneficiaries could negatively affect project delivery.

3.5 Education and development programmes in fragile contexts

Since education is one of the central goals for development, the UN and its agencies have given significant resources to education and its role in development. The MDGs include education as one of the eight development goals which are tied together to achieve an end goal of improving the quality of people's lives (UN 2015). However, MDGs are extremely challenging to achieve in fragile states.

According to Jespersen (2015), the term 'fragile states' refers to states in which governments are disorganised and operating poorly. They may be characterised by the failure of a state to provide its citizens with essential facilities and services: basic education, healthcare facilities, employment opportunities and support for disabled and older people (Dryden-Peterson 2016). This type of failure is described as failure of service entitlement by Brown et al. (2009), who identify two further types of failure as failure of authority, for example the inability to provide basic security within the country, and failure of legitimacy, such as a government established by military might or characterised by oppression of any opposition. It is noted that one or more of these types of failure may be present and that they are causally related. However, the term 'fragile state' is ambiguous and should be used with caution, as according to Brown et al. (2009, p. 3) a distinction should be made between "states that are failing, or at risk of failing, with respect to authority, comprehensive service entitlements or legitimacy".

'Fragile states' came into use in the early 1980s, then appeared more widely in the early 1990s in the context of mobilizing international efforts to help and rescue Somalia (Grimm et al. 2014). The term was subsequently applied by the international community for humanitarian reasons to the exacerbation of human rights violations in some countries such as Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some of these violations resulted from civil wars, some from revolutions, some from tensions between ethnic groups or other root causes. They all led to serious humanitarian emergencies with multiple dimensions (Messner et al. 2018). Global attention to the security threat posed by fragile states increased after the US intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan and following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack, when al-Qaeda (based in Afghanistan) targeted the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in the USA

(Kaplan 2008). Since then, fragile states have often been categorised as exporters of risks such as international terrorism, drug trafficking and illegal weapons to other countries of the world. The term has been absorbed into the political, development and security agendas of the general international community, particularly the United States of America, along with western countries and their governmental agencies. Scholars and practitioners use terms such as “fragile states,” “failed states,” and “weak states” to describe countries unable to govern and administer their territories effectively.

Manyena and Gordon (2015) proposed that fragility meant weak and under-resourced structures and situations where the social contract with the populace is broken because of the unwillingness of the government to deal with the basic functions. This social contract, itself a Western European concept which emerged most noticeably in France, assumes it is mandatory for a state to manage and allocate its resources efficiently and thus provide employment, security and safety to the rural and urban population through housing schemes, implementation of civil rights and the freedom of the people living in the state. In contrast, fragile states are asserted to suffer from social, economic and political disability, in addition to human-made and natural disasters which can cause fragility; a lack of social control and capability can transform a state from a low-income country to a fragile one (Kaplan 2008; Blattman and Ralston 2015; Jespersen 2015; Grown et al. 2016). When it becomes weakened, a state may lose control over the society and then civil unrest or civil war can arise and the condition of the state social structure can deteriorate rapidly. The government needs authority to govern and control the whole nation. Whilst much of this may be true, it can also be understood as patronising from the perspective of a government of a country deemed ‘failed’ or ‘fragile’.

Samii (2015) and Kim (2012) focused on the issue of poverty in fragile nations or contexts which they defined in terms of financial poverty, infant mortality and lack of basic resources such as water. All these apply in Yemen; just over 84% of the population of the area in my research were estimated to be living in poverty, with just under 44% living in acute poverty, as defined by the Arab Multidimensional Poverty Index methodology in the Annual Report (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia 2018).

The Fragile States Index (FSI), which is produced annually, ranks 178 countries according to twelve social, economic, political, and military indicators that impact their levels of fragility. They are represented on a map (Figure 3.1) by dark green for most improved, dark red for most worsening, with shades in between to show progress or deterioration. Other indicators are also used to rank fragile states:

Britain’s Department for International Development (DFID), the Political Instability Task Force (originally the State Failure Task Force), the Brookings Institution, the World Bank, and the OECD have all published reports or lists ranking failed or poorly governed states (Kaplan 2014, p. 50).

The 2018 FSI indicated that Yemen was “among the other most-worsened countries for 2018” because of the long periods of conflict (Messner et al. 2018, p. 9) which were leading the country towards increasing isolation and fragmentation, and which would eventually cause huge economic costs.

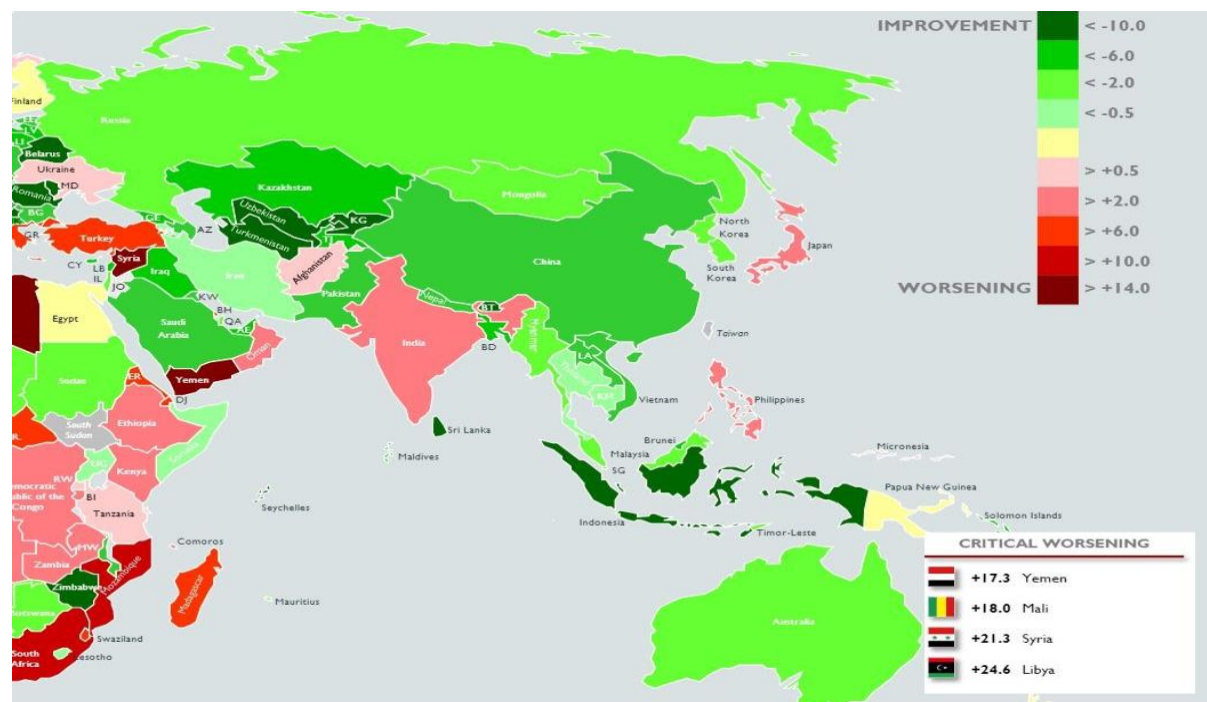


Figure 3-1 The Fragile States 2018

Source: The Fragile States Index (2018, pp. 43-45). Retrieved from www.fundforpeace.org

Many studies indicate that fragility is dynamic; a state may move into and out of fragility depending upon the particular time (Miller-Grandvaux 2009; Colenso 2011; Kotite 2012). However, the criteria that determine whether a state is described as stable or fragile concern its inability to provide services to meet the basic needs of the people, which can provoke additional drift towards increasing fragility of the state

(Verger 2015). It was proposed by Ralston (2015) that weak government policies and strategies, which are unable to achieve stability for the state in the face of economic and political challenges, lead to decline into fragility.

In terms of the education and development programmes in fragile states, it has been claimed by Riddell (2016) that the role of education is non-functioning. Education has been found to help prevent nations from slipping into a state of fragility, attributed to a preference for social stability in an educated population (Ren 2016). However, when government fails to meet very basic needs such as security for a large proportion of the population and repeatedly fails to achieve its economic and developmental goals, there is an overriding requirement for reform of the constitutional laws, regulations, and policies. Reforms should be introduced alongside new programmes for education, skills learning and employment opportunities (Ren 2016).

According to Conceição et al. (2011, pp.10-12), states can invest in the development of natural resources to “expand education, health, water, sanitation, power, roads, other infrastructure and other long-term investment projects”. These resources can then be used to expand people’s “ability to generate income” and “would likely have multiple dividends as they would increase long-term agricultural productivity and would have an impact on poverty”. As a result, poorest countries can avoid falling into a condition of fragility and “Botswana is one of the clearest examples of how natural resources can be used to enhance development”. Many researchers also argue that, in general, states should pay more attention to education as it is one of the main tools that help to bring communities together during a conflict or crisis and it helps to minimise the violence caused by inequalities (Smith 2005; Dryden-Peterson and Mundy 2011; Collier 2019).

In terms of the role of IDOs, donors together with development agencies have mainly focused on the fragile states. It has been reported by Grimm et al. (2014, p. 197) that the ‘fragile states’ concept was “framed by policy makers to describe reality in accordance with their priorities in the fields of development and security” and has been used to “fit their own political agendas”. This is supported by the observation that international agencies have increased their attention to fragile states in terms of assistance with security as well as other forms of development because such states potentially present a threat to security at a regional or global level (Nay 2013). The assistance includes engagement in what Call (2011) termed:

burgeoning capacity-building programs that include training for civil servants, embedding international technical advisers inside ministries, and fostering merit-based and formalized standards for selection and promotion in state agencies (Call 2011, p. 312).

Call notes that intervention must be swift and flexible, characteristics which are not normally associated with IDOs, and that countries must receive excellent assistance together with 'quick wins'. Whilst agencies such as IFAD focus on long term interventions, first results can help gain and open trust in structural institutions. For example, in Myanmar, a country where 70 percent of people do not have access to fuel supplies, the World Bank Group has been working with the legislature on an agreement with private investors to provide enough electricity for an additional 5 million people (Koo et al. 2018). However, this may not be possible in every country; in Yemen, the international aid community have been heavily involved in supporting a country where "more than 80 percent is suffering because of the serious shortages of food, fuel and medicines" (Rugh 2015, p. 151).

As IDOs need access to areas experiencing conflict, they have to be able to make effective connections with grassroots groups in order to work together from within to be able to help build comprehensive alliances for change and ensure that women come first (Davis et al. 2018) in view of the disadvantages suffered by women (see sections 2.6 and 2.7). It is important to note that education facilities, along with the development of infrastructure and introduction of technology by IDOs operating in those areas, are playing an important role (Lilja and Höglund 2018). In Yemen, IDOs have introduced several education programmes focused on peacebuilding. It is considered that such programmes can give a higher return to the state and a sustainable better life to the victims of the conflict and wars or the victims of hunger and extreme poverty (Manyena and Gordon 2015; Lilja and Höglund 2018). There is no doubt of the importance of IDO interventions in fragile states in particular (Fröwis 2018). Poverty reduction programmes, education programmes and other development programmes can assist those states to stabilise and begin to flourish, although the primary role of IDOs in fragile states is often the provision of basic essentials of life to people in extreme need of help. They provide financial aid in terms of food, clothing, and shelter, together with support for education and healthcare facilities, equipment and treatments (Mundy and Verger 2015). They may offer educational facilities, raise funds and establish institutes where children can access education up to high school at zero cost. Provision of free health camps and

institutions have also been introduced by IDOs in extremely poor and fragile countries of Africa and Asia (Mvukiyehe and Samii 2015).

However, some countries have accused IDOs of interfering in elections instead of concentrating on their charitable objectives and actions, for example, by taking part in electoral proceedings at the same time as providing aid to people in need (Mvukiyehe and Samii 2015). From my own experience of three elections in Yemen, we used to have many national and international agencies monitoring election processes, including observations on election day itself. However, wealthy elite groups, local and regional, rather than IDOs, appeared to be those who were involved in anything and everything to benefit their own agenda. Furthermore, some Western agencies assume that the fragile states which accept their assistance should follow the stages in a linear manner that will lead them towards the Western state model. This agenda is likely to be unrealistic as these agencies intentionally ignore the history of the targeted states particularly any historical role of Western colonial powers (Call 2011). Moreover, there is a risk that IDOs could cause further damage to fragile states, particularly at the level of working in partnership with governments where the government or other authority is corrupt and could exploit the partnership with the IDO to progress their corruption agenda. (Brett 2008).

In short, developing countries are considered by developed countries to become fragile when their government is unable to meet the basic needs of life such as food, shelter, and clothing. It is mandatory for a state to manage and allocate its resources efficiently and create employment for its people. Reasons why states can slide into fragility can range from natural disaster to economic disaster, civil war or foreign invasion as well as power struggles and corruption, and IDOs have to be careful that, whether they provide emergency or long-term support, they avoid prolonging the situation by encouraging dependency or making the situation worse by colluding with corruption. Peace-building initiatives in education and skills development may be a vital first step but they also have to support programmes for food production, infrastructure development or reconstruction and income generation for people living in extreme poverty. IDOs have to be aware of their own agendas and those of their donors as well as the governments of fragile states and attempt to navigate a way through them to deliver the core goals.

3.6 Summary

Research in Arabic regarding gender issues and rural settings has indicated that increasing enrolment in primary schools in Yemen has not prevented girls from dropping out of education earlier than boys. Reasons for this were cultural norms which included safety concerns and early marriage. Shortages of schools and female teachers for girls were additional problems which were made worse by lack of financial support. Attempts to introduce more women into parliament in Yemen in 2008 were stopped by Islamic clerics and tribal leaders.

The failure to make good progress towards the MDGs was attributed to political instability, inability to control Yemen's border and corruption, with budgets for development being diverted to the military (Ateeq 2013). The role of donors and international development organisations was either ignored or seen as enabling the state to escape from its responsibilities to its people.

Various understandings of education and development were presented, noting the links with economic and political theory. The influence of the West was seen in modernisation theory, the importance attached to democracy and the way in which education was perceived as necessary to both allow a greater number of individuals to share the financial gains from modernisation and facilitate democracy. In contrast to popular belief, research has shown that democracy does not always promote economic growth (Gerring et al. 2005; Rachdi and Saidi 2015), whereas notable economic growth has been associated with investment in primary and secondary education in lower income countries (Breton 2013).

International agency programmes have therefore invested heavily in formal education, mainly primary and secondary education. Adult education, such as literacy for women, has not been a major feature, as it was considered but rejected for inclusion in the MDGs. Education tends to take the form of specific skills training, especially in business skills and agricultural techniques, together with capacity building (in terms of production and management) for the establishment and maintenance of farmer associations. Some programmes provide leadership and trainer training for women and, in situations of conflict, skills such as mediation.

The negative effects in general of poverty and conflict on education were noted, along with the particular negative effect of poverty on women's participation in education.

Economic modelling by Baliamoune-Lutz and McGillivray (2015) led them to conclude that women's participation in education not only increased their confidence but directly benefited country development. However, endorsement of rural women's role in country development could add to their burdens; even if they earn money, they may not in practice have real access to it and other family members may be more likely to benefit from it. On the other hand, women's education could open doors to new opportunities and greater freedoms if it was viewed from a capability perspective.

IDO's operate under the Declaration on the Right to Development adopted by the UN in 1986, working in partnership with a country's government but not replacing its responsibility. NGOs have become important to economic improvement and can bridge the gap between the government and marginalised groups, although their existence may be seen as threatening in some states. Although NGOs can be close to grassroots communities, some are funded by large foreign donors who have different priorities from their communities. Development as practised by IDOs can be carried out with aims of improving socio-economic conditions or social justice (Rist 2007) and this can take different forms. A focus on poverty reduction can lead to too much emphasis on per capita income and economic growth, while too little attention is paid to improvements in the quality of life (Brinkman and Brinkman 2011) or human development. Thus, there are different purposes of development which require different measures and evaluation.

Sen (1981, 1989) argued that social reforms including education were needed before economic reforms could produce the desired growth. In lower income countries, education makes a strong contribution to economic development which aims to improve people's quality of life (Todaro and Smith 2003).

The strands of development came together in the form of the MDGs, although the commitments to lifelong learning for women in the 1996 UN Declaration were omitted from the MDGs. (United Nations 1996). IDOs funded by the World Bank, like IFAD, are required to produce plans which describe the country's poverty reduction strategy. Such strategies can be market-based pro-poor growth, adopting a sustainable livelihoods approach, or resource based, but in all cases development should be treated as a process which engages local communities at all stages from planning to implementation. Participatory development needs to address power relations with men and institutions to be able to facilitate the empowerment of marginalised women

in rural communities. However, participatory development can fail for various reasons, including patchy community engagement, inadequate state support and unrealistic donor expectations.

Fragile states such as Yemen pose tremendous challenges to achieving MDGs, including education, since they are characterised by a lack of basic services, law and order, security or legitimate government, or by some combination of these. Serious civil unrest or war typically leads to complex and extensive humanitarian emergencies, as in Yemen, where conditions worsened significantly in 2018 (Messner et al. 2018) and have continued to do so.

The role of education is said to be non-functioning in fragile states; instead, the need for reform of constitutional and regulatory arrangements takes precedence, although new programmes for education, skills and employment should be brought in along with the reform (Ren 2016). The role of IDOs in fragile states tends to focus on humanitarian aid, institutional capacity-building and restoration of essential utilities and infrastructure. They need to connect effectively with the grassroots and prioritise women because they suffer greater disadvantage (Davis et al. 2018). In this way in Yemen, IDOs have introduced several education programmes focused on peacebuilding, even when other projects have ended due to safety and security concerns.

There are concerns regarding the agendas of some IDOs, especially political interference and a perceived absence of accountability. The concerns may be compounded by the history of colonialism in some of the targeted states, also by the risk of corrupt governments taking advantage of their partnerships with IDOs.

Different purposes and understandings of education have been presented, some of which are more applicable to the cultural and political situation in Yemen than others. The transmission of and preservation of knowledge, culture and faith and the development of self within that framework is one such purpose in Yemen. Education as transformation of self and society as propounded by Freire is therefore not an accepted concept. The progressivism and advancement of society supported by Dewey and Noddings is similarly set aside, as is the link between education and democratic processes. The purpose and understanding of education for girls and women can be variously seen as social justice, a human right or as human capital.

Yemen has signed up to international goals regarding primary education for girls within a human capital framework, although it has not achieved them. The human capital theory of education supports both formal and informal education as a means to economic growth, thus includes training for income-generating activities for women. However, the MDGs excluded adult female literacy which, for many women, may be an essential first step towards benefiting from income-generating activities, so the human capital theory clearly prevailed over the human rights theory at that time. Whilst Yemen has by default adopted a human capital approach to education in the context of international development, the underlying purpose and understanding of education remains the transmission and preservation of knowledge and culture.

It has been suggested that a capability approach could be a useful analytical tool for understanding fragility of individual citizens and institutions in order to develop policies that could slow or prevent decline of an entire nation (Dubois, Huyghebaert and Brouillet 2010). This is an appropriate point to present capability approach in more depth as it is the key theoretical framework used in this thesis for analysing and interpreting the data.

Chapter 4 Capability approach: conceptual framework

4.1 Introduction

The search for a conceptual framework led me to reject various theories of international development and education which could be considered primarily sociological or political, for three main reasons. The first reason was that whilst they possibly offered an analysis and greater understanding of what the problems were, they were less helpful in terms of considering how policies and programmes could be improved, either because the analysis was quite static or because it led to conclusions and recommendations that were too broad for a doctoral thesis. I needed a framework that would assist me in identifying possible improvements to the problem situation through examination of the processes involved because improvement implies making changes to a process. It was also important to select a framework which could address both the international development and education aspects of the thesis and bring together the findings from three different sources, namely policy and programme documents, participant interviews, and an autoethnographic contribution. Even after selecting the capability approach, I had to use a novel application of the framework to suit my research as explained in Section 4.3.

4.2 Capability approach

The capability approach, which was developed initially by Amartya Sen in the 1980s, has emerged as a leading explanatory framework in economics of welfare and development (Clark 2006; Fukuda-Parr 2011). It has also been termed “an important ethic for international development” (Crocker 1992, p. 584). It avoids unbalanced accounts of well-being such as those which focus only on self-reported measures of quality of life or those which use measures such as percentage reduction in poverty or increase in income, instead providing a fuller picture. It has been described as:

a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society (Robeyns 2005, p. 94).

Continuing development of the approach has led to its use as an analytical and assessment theoretical framework in various social sciences fields, related to the topics of well-being, international justice, human development and human rights

(Saito 2003; Robeyns 2006; Clark 2006; Deneulin and Shahani 2009; Kremakova 2013), as well as education (Unterhalter 2007).

There are differing versions and applications of the approach (Robeyns 2017, p. 32) which are underpinned by philosophical differences about how it should be described and conceptualised. However, it is widely understood and accepted as a conceptual framework that can be employed in a range of disciplines for a variety of normative exercises. These have notably included:

- (1) the assessment of individual well-being;
- (2) the evaluation and assessment of social arrangements;
- and (3) the design of policies and proposals about social change in society (Robeyns 2013, p. 456).

Robeyns has indicated additional ways in which the capability approach has been used, in particular in theories of social justice, education and human rights in the works of Martha Nussbaum. Normative exercises, based on assumptions and values of how things should be, typically emphasize specific aspects of what people can be and do, for example their opportunities for better health, education or freedom from food insecurity. In addition to the relevance of the capability approach to the economics of welfare and development, Robeyns (2005, p. 194) has observed that it can be employed in qualitative analysis to yield rich and complex description, and to help explain behaviours by taking into account factors such as cultural norms. One example where a capability approach has been used with reflexive autoethnography together with situational analysis in educational research is a study of school improvement in Tanzania (Tao 2010), in which it was also proposed that a capability approach could also be used as “a framework for action” (p. 4).

There are two main strands of the capability approach, one originating with Amartya Sen and the other with Martha Nussbaum’s development of his ideas. The most noticeable difference is that Nussbaum (2003) has asserted that a definitive list of the most important capabilities is essential in order to defend freedoms, especially women’s freedoms, within a normative framework. She has rejected Sen’s concept that capabilities may not be universal and definitive but may vary according to cultural context, highlighting that certain freedoms for some people can limit the freedoms of others, potentially allowing inequalities and injustices to continue or even increase. However, Nussbaum’s passionate advocacy that all people all over the world should be entitled, as a matter of justice, to threshold levels of all the capabilities on her list carries with it a requirement of governments to guarantee these entitlements

(Nussbaum 2006, p. 70). This is aspirational but not realistic in countries that are considered fragile or failed states and are struggling to feed, shelter and provide basic healthcare for their citizens as the result of natural or human-made disasters. Hence, despite Nussbaum's distinct focus on social justice that has paid specific attention to gender inequality, the main emphasis in this thesis is on the capability approach as framed by Sen. Another strand of work based on capability approach has been carried out by economists Ul Haq (1995) and Anand et al. (2008; 2009) to develop measurement of capabilities in the Human Development Index. This, together with results-based management, led to the production of the Millennium Development Goals, although the end result was perhaps more influenced by measurable outcomes than human rights (Hulme 2007).

From the point of view of my research, capability approach is particularly appropriate in view of its use in researching education for disadvantaged individuals, its specific use in conjunction with situational analysis and autoethnography, and its applicability to generating rich description which encompasses cultural norms.

All capability approaches share a common set of concepts and assumptions (Robeyns 2017, p. 38). Robeyns¹ lists these as: value-neutral concepts of functionings and capabilities as core concepts which give rise to the 'evaluative space'; other dimensions of value; conversion factors; fundamental and correct values which can conflict with each other (value pluralism); and valuing each individual. The concept of 'evaluative space' acknowledges that individuals may value beings and doings for their own sake. It is a different not a prescriptive measure of well-being, unlike measurements in terms of income or resources. It also considers individuals' freedom of choice in relation to the range of available capabilities and functionings (Sen 1992, 1993). It is essential to pause at this point to define the core concepts.

4.2.1 Functionings

Functionings are states of 'being and doing', "in particular the various things that he or she manages to do or be in leading a life" (Sen 1993, p. 31) such as being well-nourished, having shelter or practising a religion. Individuals may need goods and

¹ Robeyns completed her PhD thesis on *Gender inequality: a capability perspective* at Cambridge University, supervised by Amartya Sen. She works on issues in contemporary political philosophy and applied ethics. Publications include 'Three models of education: rights, capabilities and human capital', *Theory and Research in Education*, 2006, 4(1), pp. 69-84

services to achieve functionings, for example literate individuals need reading matter to achieve the functioning of reading. Functionings can also in Sen's view include achievements such as self-respect and participation in community life as well as freedom from avoidable disease and adequate nourishment (1999, pp. 73-77).

Sen (1993) makes clear that achieving functioning is dependent on a range of personal factors such as age, gender, nutritional knowledge and education. He further clarifies that it is also dependent on a range of social factors including social structures and cultural norms, power relations and public policies.

Different functionings are emphasized by different scholars according to the purpose and context of their work. Nussbaum's list of ten "central human capabilities" comprises: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; connection with other species; play; and control over one's environment (Nussbaum 2006, p. 76–78). Literacy is included within senses, imagination and thought (Nussbaum 2000, p.78) and is associated with political participation and employment. Her definition of control over the environment includes political participation and owning property and other assets on an equal basis with others (Nussbaum 2000, p.78). Nussbaum's list has been criticised as having a neo-colonialist character, on the basis that it assumes that a state is organised and operates in a particular way (Charusheela 2009).

4.2.2 Capabilities

Capability (or capabilities) refers to:

the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve. Capability is, thus, a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another...to choose from possible livings (Sen 1992, p. 40).

In this context, vectors, as in mathematics, mean the different directions and extents that a functioning could take. For example, a literate individual may only have access to the Qur'an or may have many different kinds of reading matter available on the internet, perhaps is studying jurisprudence at university or has access to all these and more. Thus different individuals with the same skill set have different capabilities. A person with, for example, severe dyslexia may have a different skill set and capabilities. At the level of the individual, increasing capabilities enhances freedoms of choice about how she or he wants to live their life; personal development and individual freedoms are elements of the same process. Notably, according to Sen

(1999b), capability is the set of real opportunities an individual has to choose from in order to achieve the life they have reason to value.

4.2.3 Conversion factors

The example of how literacy applies in the life of an individual brings in another core concept, that of 'conversion factors' which can be personal, social and environmental (Robeyns 2005). Conversion factors help or hinder the ability of an individual to turn resources or commodities into functionings (Sen 1992). In the above example, literacy and dyslexia are personal conversion factors which affect a person's ability to convert reading material into a functioning. A social conversion factor could be that girls or women are not thought to need education like sons do or, conversely, a national literacy programme for girls and women. An environmental factor could be a lack of roads to reach places where literacy classes or reading material are available. Time available for participating in educational activities is a personal conversion factor which can be strongly affected by social and environmental conversion factors. A woman who has five or six young children and works in agriculture, in line with cultural and social norms, may have less time as well as less opportunity. It might be socially unacceptable for a woman to drive even though she has a driving licence and a car, the roads are good and the law permits her to do so. In another country, a woman may have a licence and car, driving may be socially acceptable, but the few existing roads are in a poor condition that will probably damage the vehicle. The end result may be the same, or may be different, depending on the relative strengths of these conversion factors as they are perceived by the individual. This means that the resources which exist may not be available for individuals to use. It also means that in a 'fragile context' where there are likely to be fewer existing resources, there will be significant changes in the influence of some or all of the conversion factors.

This is important in how Sen (1992, p. 31) distinguishes between an individual's actual achieved functionings (achievement) and their freedom to achieve. Achieved functionings are concerned with what individuals manage to actually do and be, whereas freedom is concerned with the real opportunity for individuals to accomplish what they value. This distinction is important in international development, for example having enough to eat may depend on humanitarian aid rather than subsistence farming. Dependence on a single crop offers less freedom, a smaller capability set, than having several crops and agricultural co-operatives further widen the set. At the

same time, personal conversion factors such as knowing how to cultivate a variety of crops and how to form co-operatives or create a value chain and sell the crops also come into play.

When Sen published *Development as Freedom* (1999), he argued that at the country level, human development concerned the enlargement of citizens' basic capabilities, thereby increasing their effective freedom to choose between different combinations that they have reason to value. In the context of education, Walker has asserted that human development requires "we address human development not simply as abstract ideas, but as lived capacities at the level of everyday life" (Walker 2005, p. 104).

So being literate in poor rural communities may be a functioning for some individuals but if they have no access to reading matter (mobile phone, internet connection or printed matter) and perhaps have no time, their capabilities (set of freedoms to read) will be severely limited or even non-existent. One of the roles of international development organisations could therefore be to expand the opportunities for literate individuals to access a variety of reading matter. However, reading may not be a functioning of value to some individuals, although in rural Yemeni homes with access to a copy of the Qur'an, being able to read the Qur'an may well be a functioning of value and bring with it other functionings such as greater self-respect and respect from family members and others in the community.

Literacy is not straightforward to categorise within a capability approach framework. As previously discussed, literacy can be understood as a personal conversion factor. Sen situates it within education which he terms a basic capability that includes "the ability to read and write, and the ability to benefit from sustained schooling" (Sen 1985, p. 76), whilst Nussbaum considers it to be an essential component of education which is associated with political participation and employment and is one aspect of a central human capability of senses, emotion and thought (Nussbaum 2000, p. 78). In the life of an individual women, literacy could be termed a conversion factor, a capability or a functioning, depending on where she is in her journey through life, what she values, the opportunities available to her to use her literacy and the decisions she takes. From the point of view of an IDO, opportunities without the knowledge or skills to take up the opportunities cannot lead to development, nor can knowledge or skills promote development if there are not the opportunities to use the knowledge or skills. IDOs may need to work together to provide both the skills and opportunities aspects of

capabilities. Moreover, a person's achievements can be "judged in terms of her own values and objectives" (Sen 1999a, p. 19), irrespective of any external criteria. This leads to consideration of the key concept of agency, a term which is also open to different understandings that reflect its purpose within a particular context as noted by Claassen (2017, p. 285).

4.2.4 Agency

In the capability approach, agency is necessary to achieve functionings. Agency here concerns a person's "ability to act on behalf of what matters" (Alkire 2007, p.163), "the goals that a person has reason to adopt, which can inter alia include goals other than the advancement of his or her own well-being" (Sen 1993, p. 35). Sen has further associated agency with individuals helping each other and being active participants in processes of change rather than passive recipients of aid or instructions from others (1999a, p. 281).

Agency is interrelated to the concepts of freedom and achievement and, like them, is affected by both internal and external factors that impact on the attainment of individual or group goals considered essential to human development. Sen asserts that human well-being "may plausibly be seen in terms of a person's functionings and capabilities: what he or she is able to do or be" (1987, p. 8). At the same time, he recognises that the political, social and cultural environment impacts on individuals' freedom to exercise their agency. He stresses the importance of democratic practice, observing that "To be prevented from participation in the political life of the community is a major deprivation" (Sen 1999b, p. 9). For Sen, it is not enough for a country to have rapid economic growth and rising living standards if its citizens lack the freedoms to expand their capabilities and exercise their agency. However, he does not argue for specific aspects of agency in a certain cultural frame as Alkire and Denulin do (2009). They state that agency emphasizes "self-determination, authentic self-direction, autonomy, self-reliance, empowerment, voice and so on" (Alkire and Denulin, p. 37).

For Sen, capability is a metric of individual freedom - the freedom to achieve well-being through the real opportunities to do and be what the individual has reason to value, including basic freedoms to do certain things considered necessary for survival and to avoid or escape poverty or other serious deprivations. The relevance of basic capabilities is "not so much in ranking living standards, but in deciding on a cut-off

point for the purpose of assessing poverty and deprivation” (Sen 1987, 109). In *India: Development and Participation*, Sen asserts the vital role of giving opportunities to expand citizens’ capabilities and freedoms through social opportunities, whether these are provided by governments, NGOs, communities or some other group, organisation or institution (Drèze and Sen 2002). It is also argued that education is one of the basic capabilities for living a life of meaningful choice which has an intrinsic value and is also useful in achieving the wider goals of a society or country. This is especially relevant to the consideration of IFAD’s work in Yemen, which aims to empower women and achieve national goals of improving health and reducing poverty. However, it raises the issue of whether the education activities IFAD provides do enable women to live a life of meaningful choice because, as Drèze and Sen express it:

The options that a person has depend greatly on relations with others and on what the state and other institutions do. We shall be particularly concerned with those opportunities that are strongly influenced by social circumstances and public policy (Drèze and Sen 2002, p. 6).

A similar view of agency is also relevant in education and learning, as expressed in the work of Bandura who described human functioning in terms of interactions between individual, behavioural and environmental determinant factors (Bandura 1986).

4.3 Conceptual framework

The capability approach has led to several theoretical frameworks with practical applications. These range from the high-level indicators in the Human Development Index to the model developed for grassroots-led development (Ibrahim 2017). My thesis required what Robeyns terms a capability theory or application (2017, p. 19) which would enable me to critically examine and explore the work of an international development organisation which is positioned between government, the World Bank, national and international consultants and human beings living in poor rural communities in Yemen. IFAD’s policies and programmes and their implementation represent something of a balancing act between these very different stakeholders. To keep the particular focus of my thesis, I had to narrow down the ways in which I could adopt a specific application. My choice of theoretical framework, shown in Figure 4.1, captures the elements of the development process that must be present and work

together if individuals' capabilities are to be expanded. Sections 5.12, 7.1, 8.1 and 9.1 describe how the framework was used in the data analysis.

I adapted Robeyns' diagram (Figure 4.1 below) to reflect factors and issues that emerged from the literature review. I omitted many of the elements related to politics, the environment and the economy because, although they are very important in terms of what happens in Yemen, they were outside the focus of my case study and too complex to try to include in a single study. However, income and land were retained in a 'resources' group because they were directly relevant to poverty reduction and agriculture. 'Satisfaction' was also omitted because individual beneficiaries' satisfaction with their capabilities and functionings was not investigated in this thesis; this would have required a further separate study. Social and public conversion factors were allocated to one group which highlighted IFAD, other donors and NGOs, while social influences (family, community, organisation) were allocated to another group. Finally, individual conversion factors were based on restrictions on women identified in the literature review and were the most relevant to the thesis, namely gender, age, skills, literacy and education.

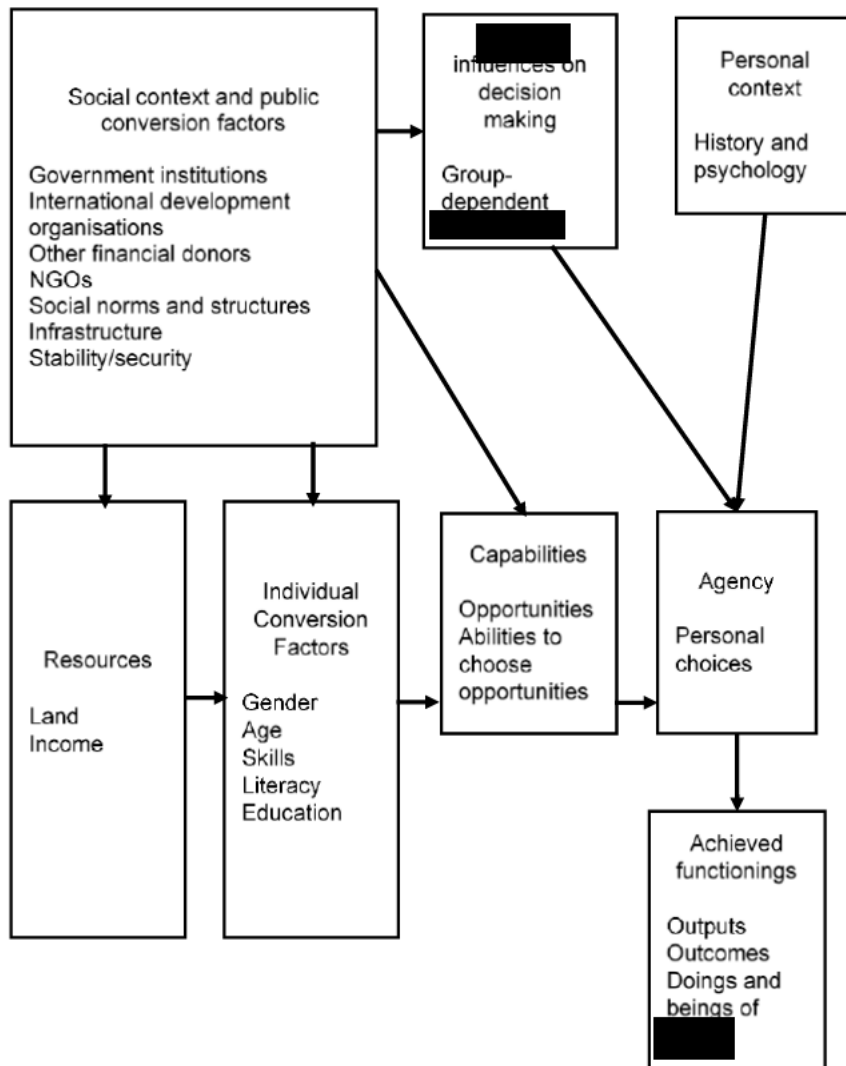


Figure 4-1 Elements of capability building approach

Source: Adapted from Robeyns (2017) Figure 2.1, p. 83

4.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the capability approach, the theoretical framework for the analysis and interpretation of data in the present study. Developed initially by Amartya Sen in the 1980s, it is now regarded as a leading explanatory and normative framework in economics of welfare and development which is relevant to international development, human rights and education, in particular education for disadvantaged individuals. Indeed, efforts to establish measures of a range of capabilities led to the Millennium Development Goals. It can be used in qualitative analysis to yield rich description, taking into account cultural norms among other factors (Robeyns 2005).

It has previously been used by Tao (2010) in educational research in which situational analysis was combined with reflexive autoethnography.

It is not a single theory but an approach, which means that it is used in different ways for different purposes, although there are shared assumptions and concepts. Two of the leading scholars, Sen and Nussbaum, differ regarding whether there should be a single agreed and guaranteed list of capabilities; Sen advocates for flexibility to allow for differences in cultures and recognises that such a list would not be helpful to lower income or fragile states. Moreover, Nussbaum offers a distinctly Western feminist interpretation of capabilities which is less appropriate for Yemen.

Robeyns (2017) defines the shared notions as value-neutral concepts of functionings and capabilities, conversion factors, value pluralism and valuing each individual. In the capability approach, functionings are states of 'being and doing' which can include states such as participation in community life as well as being adequately nourished. Achievement of functionings depends on personal factors such as gender and education, and social factors such as cultural norms (Sen 1993).

Capability is defined as the options and freedoms to choose among them that an individual has, or as Sen (1992, p. 40) expresses it: "a set of vectors of functionings". Examples were given of how personal conversion factors such as dyslexia and literacy affected individuals' functionings and hence their capability. Further examples were given to illustrate how social and environmental conversion factors could help or hinder functionings and capability. It was noted that in low income and fragile countries there may be a lack of resources for individuals to be able to convert.

There is a distinction between what a person manages to do and be in life (achieved functionings) and the real opportunities they have to do and be what they value (freedom) (Sen 1992). The distinction is important because, according to Sen (1999), human development in any particular country is about giving people more options and thus more freedom of choice in life. Education should be about increasing capabilities and freedom (Walker 2005).

However, individuals may or may not value education if it does not lead to opportunities they value. Their goals and the action they are able and willing to take to achieve them is termed 'agency' in the capability approach. Agency also refers to people helping each other to achieve shared goals, including active participation in

change instead of passive receipt of aid or direction from others. An individual's freedom to exercise agency can be increased or limited by their political, social and cultural environment. This means that the ability to participate in political life is important (Sen 1999b), although the cultural context may affect how agency is understood.

Whilst education is considered one of the basic capabilities essential for having meaningful choices in life, it is recognised that individual opportunities are greatly affected by social circumstances and public policy. This is highly relevant to Yemen.

The appropriate application of the capability approach for my thesis uses the essential elements of the approach, including social and policy context, taking the case of IFAD's work in Dhamar, to critically examine whether all the required components of the development process are in place to facilitate or enable the expansion of individuals' - particularly women's – capabilities through the delivery of educational activities.

Chapter 5 Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have specified the research aim and questions, provided the country context, presented selected relevant findings from literature, and set out the theoretical framework. This chapter describes and justifies the research methodology and methods that I adopted to answer my research questions, linking my positionality as a researcher with the chosen approach. It is important to be clear about this link because it underpins the whole structure of the thesis, the choice of a qualitative approach within a critical realism perspective and the particular methods used. The chapter continues with defining the terms 'methodology' and 'method' as used here before briefly describing the major options for research design and strategy. The following section presents and critically examines the importance of autoethnography in the light of my positionality within this research. After this, the theoretical stance is presented, followed by examination of the case study methodology, the qualitative methods of data collection (autoethnography, semi-structured interviews and policy and programme documents) and the sampling procedures. In order to gather a range of perspectives, participants were drawn from a variety of backgrounds as described in more detail in Section 5.10 and Table 5.3. In addition to the perspectives of IFAD's own staff, one group of consultants at national level offered insights into countrywide development projects from the viewpoints of gender and economics. The inclusion of two international consultants provided a broader perspective on agricultural and participatory projects because they had worked in a number of other countries and could indicate any similarities or differences between approaches to development as well as country contexts. The final group brought specific relevant viewpoints to the case study as Yemenis working in government departments or for other rural projects: agricultural planning, financial contribution to projects, community development and further and adult education including tackling illiteracy. The process of data analysis is outlined and justified, and the chapter concludes with ethical considerations relevant to this research.

5.2 Methodology and Methods

Different scholars define methodology differently and therefore it is useful to define how the term is used in the present study. For Silverman (2010, p. 210) methodology is about the way “one will go about studying any phenomenon”. In order to study any phenomenon, the researcher needs to describe and analyse their methods in order to highlight assumptions and limitations and resources, allowing readers to make their own judgments regarding the usefulness of the research (Wellington 2015). In similar vein, the researcher needs to justify the approach and methods used to arrive at the knowledge presented (Clough and Nutbrown 2002; Scott and Usher 2011) so that readers can understand the significance of the research and make sense of what was done and why. In this respect, methodology can be considered an umbrella over the research which is significant in the entire process of the research from the very beginning. Methodology is less concerned with the practical application of the methods than with the thinking behind their selection. “Methodological work is, therefore, philosophical, thinking work” (Sikes, 2004, p. 16).

Methods are the techniques, the tools for doing research, and collecting and analysing data. A wide variety of tools and techniques are available for researchers to use during qualitative data collection, including questionnaire, observation, interview and audio-recording (Silverman 2000, p. 44; Becker and Bryman 2004, p. 186; Cohen et al. 2018). It is essential to have a clear idea about the research design, which should include the identification of the research philosophy or theoretical stance, as well as the approach and strategy including methods of data collection and analysis (Kothari 2014; Wellington 2015). A lack of understanding of these issues might adversely affect the quality of the outputs of the research. It is essential to have clear guidelines for the research process so that the researcher can follow a particular path which leads from asking the appropriate research questions to addressing them. It is therefore important for a researcher to understand research processes and design, as emphasized by Creswell (2008). The specific approach adopted in the present research is shown in Figure 5.1.

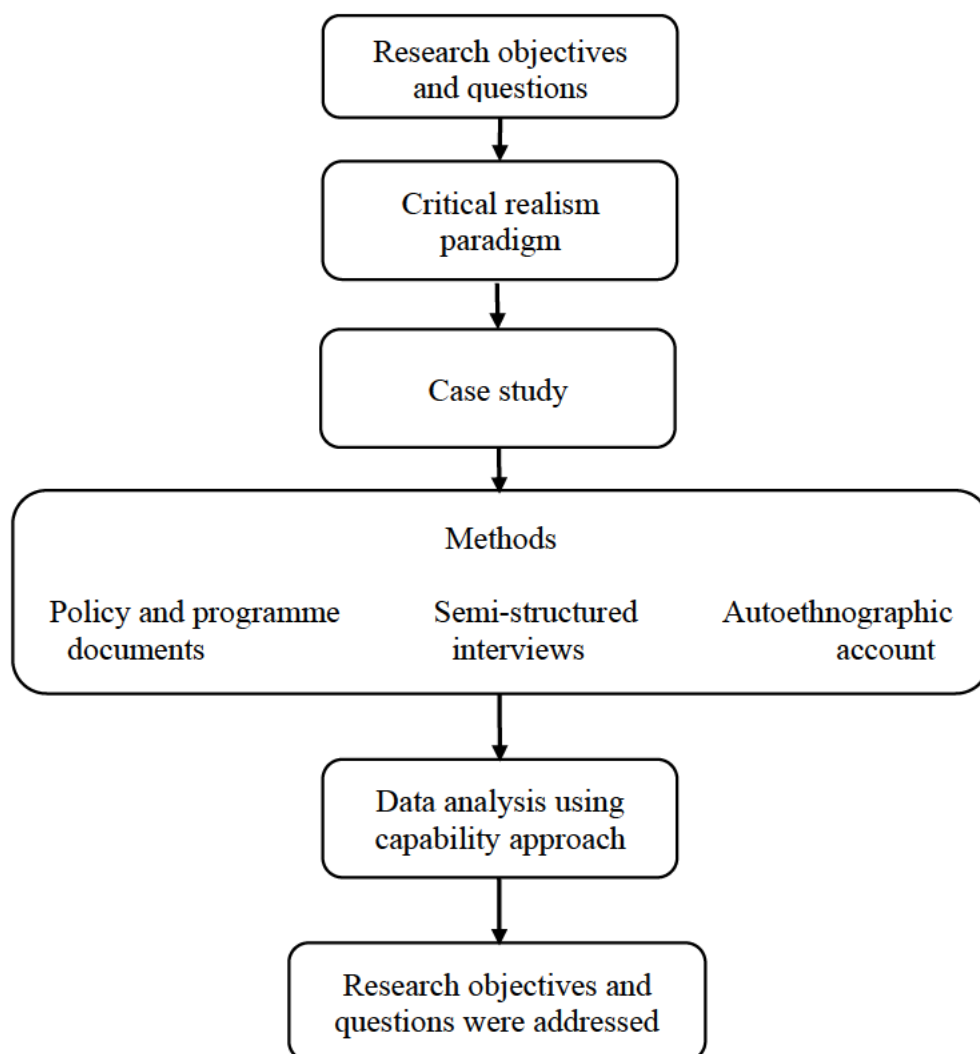


Figure 5-1 Research Process

5.3 Options in research design

There are many possible and sometimes confusing options for choosing an approach, under the various headings of paradigm, philosophical stance, ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. I shall share my decisions, beginning by justifying my ontological assumptions about the nature of reality, followed by my epistemological assumptions about the nature of knowledge and ways of acquiring it. In making my choice, I have noted that one of the most important challenges for the researcher is to ensure that the research design is coherent, consistent, rigorous and fully justifiable (Sikes 2004).

Three major options have been traditionally identified for doing educational research (Cohen et al. 2005). The first, based on the 'scientific' or positivist paradigm rests upon the creation of theoretical frameworks that can be tested by

experimentation, replication and refinement. The second seeks to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors, often from the researcher's point of view, and consequently may be described as interpretive and subjective (Creswell 2007). A third approach is that of critical educational research which is emancipatory in purpose and challenges and attempts to change the status quo (Griffiths 2009) and therefore seeks to reveal the impact of political structures and relationships of power.

5.3.1 Critical realism

In recent years, attention has been paid to applying another paradigm of critical realism in educational research as a further option which deals with multiple layers and their interactions, including organisations, people, social structures and culture. Critical realism originated with Roy Bhaskar, an economist and later a philosopher, who introduced the concept of varying levels or layers of reality: empirical (what people perceive and experience), actual (actions and events) and real (underlying and unobservable institutions, structures, powers, cultural conventions and beliefs that act as mechanisms which cause events) (Bhaskar 1978, p. 13). Bhaskar also posited a complex relationship between structure and agency; in any social event, he referred to interactions between people (agents) and social structure as "existentially interdependent but essentially distinct" (Bhaskar 1989, p.92). For him, human agency exists within social structures which influence it and which in turn it influences, whether by reproducing or altering the structures.

David Scott, professor of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment at the UCL Institute of Education, has, with Bhaskar, developed critical realism as a theory of education (Scott 2015). Scott describes critical realism as a meta-theory which avoids the divide between positivist and interpretivist understandings of the world (2006, p. 633). He highlights that at any point in time, "the central relation of social reality is between agency and structure" (Scott 2006, p. 638), which is important to my research looking at initiatives which facilitate women empowerment. Gender can be viewed as a structural feature of society which can be used as a means of controlling the members of a society (Henslin 2006). As a social structure, it discriminates in terms of opportunities and restrictions and has consequences for the development of self, the effect of cultural expectations on interactions between women and men including those at the same level in the

structure, and on gender-specific regulations governing the way in which resources are distributed (Risman 2004, p. 433). Moreover, Risman proposes that considering gender as structure raises its importance to the same level as politics or the economy in social analysis. This is consistent with Scott who argues that the social world has a real existence which is distinct from the individual participant or researcher and adds that relationships between structures could be different (Scott 2006, p. 640). These ideas are also important to my research, as well as his assertion that “Critical realists...foreground social actors’ descriptions of their experiences, projects and desires” (Scott 2006, p. 641). Specific points of relevance to my research are discussed in Sections 5.4 (ontology) and 5.5 (epistemology).

5.4 Ontology

Ontological assumptions are assumptions about the nature of reality (Maykut and Morehouse 2001, p. 4; Snape and Spencer 2003, p. 20; Scott and Marshall 2005, p. 463; Scott and Usher 2011, p. 12). These include assumptions about whether a social reality exists separately from human perceptions and whether there exists a shared social reality or multiple realities which are context-specific ones (Ormston et al. 2014, p. 4). Some scholars identify critical realism as appropriate for social sciences because it argues there are certain facts and objects which are external to the people perceiving or reacting to them. Scott (2014) argues for its role in educational research for various reasons, one of which is to consider the influence of structure on individuals and their scope for freedom of action, for example to influence structure. This feels very appropriate for exploration of an international development context.

I would highlight the version of critical realism given by Fleetwood (2014) in the context of social sciences and organisation studies and in the field of education as proposed by Scott (2010). Critical realism, for me, is a reminder that strategic plans, budgets, targets and documents exist in international development organisations and governments independently of those who create and use them and have opinions about them and how they should be used. After they have been created, they become part of the unobservable structures, conventions and powers and influence the actions of people who work for the organisations, but they and the structures can of course also be influenced by the people. It is a

useful reminder that tangible objects such as a lack of roads, suitable buildings, IT infrastructure and convenient water supplies are also part of the reality that I am investigating. It encourages me to examine different levels of data and analysis and to seek diverse understandings, which can include my own, in building up a layered picture of the reality I am investigating. However, I am not excused from justifying my own views and feelings or the presence of my 'self' in the research.

A critical realist approach may be able to offer a helpful analysis of gender in terms of the relationship between agency and structure, as proposed by Mader (2016), through what he terms "domination-based shaping of the action-situation" (p. 441). His approach may also assist in unpacking some of the elements of culture as well as gender, in particular through the concepts of social position and social role, which he acknowledges originated with Archer (1995). The distinction between social position, which he terms "one's place in the social stratification of resources" (Mader 2016, p. 443) and social role, such as mother or teacher, may help to identify where some of the restrictions on capability extension are coming from and thus help to indicate how they might be addressed. Mader understands domination as a particular type of restriction of agency, "based on the fact that essential parameters of the objective or symbolic aspects of an agent's action-situation are in the power of another agent" (Mader 2016, p. 444). "The overall social structures of resource distribution (social positions), institutions and organizations (social roles), as well as culture (social identity) in which agents are located, function as external fields which constitute two agents' respective powers to act as asymmetrical, making possible the power of one agent over the other" (Mader 2016, p. 446).

5.5 Epistemology

As illustrated in Table 5.1, critical realism assumes that some knowledge is relative while other knowledge is absolute. Two of the traditional epistemologies in social research are objectivism and constructivism, although there are many more recent variations. In my field of research, an objectivist epistemology might focus on counting the number of rural women attending or completing literacy classes, perhaps with an end of course test to measure achievement against a set of criteria. A constructivist epistemology might use self-reported satisfaction,

focus groups, participant observation and personal constructs (Cohen et al. 2000) to understand how participants provide meaning to their reality through social interaction (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Snape and Spencer 2003). This is mainly, but not exclusively, how I see myself collecting and analysing data in my research when participants are sharing their experiences. I also have to try to take account of at least some of the external political events, organisational structures, procedures and relationships that affect my participants' actions and interpretations in ways that may well be different from my own response. There are natural resources which have a fixed existence apart from the people who use them. There are budgets, rules, procedures and management systems in government which are influenced by gender as a structure and which exist independently of the people who use (or abuse) them, so not all of the knowledge is socially constructed at a particular point in time. The people who own socially constructed knowledge at a point in time interact with situations that were socially constructed by one or more previous groups. As they interact with those pre-existing situations (a different layer of reality) and with each other, they will either reproduce the existing structures or modify them. This is relevant in a society which seeks to reproduce the Islamic way of life, including the role of women, through its education system.

Personally, I consider research methods that involve a collection of individuals' subjective views and perceptions about social reality and my interpretation of them, as the most valuable means of collecting and analysing data for generating credible knowledge in my research. However, my research is about exploring and understanding the involvement of IFAD in Yemen with particular focus on women and education, which means I need to consider some of the facts and artefacts involved, such as the policies of the institution. I also need to consider how my participants interact with the IFAD structure and how IFAD interacts with the institutions of government. For this reason, I would term my epistemology 'social constructionism plus'.

Table 5.1 shows a straightforward comparison of what I understand the three main philosophical positions to be concerning the nature of reality and how these are linked to the main types of epistemology and methods. Following one of these gives me consistency in my research design and methodology.

Table 5-1 Types of Research by Philosophical Foundation

Philosophical foundation	Empirical realist paradigm	Idealist paradigm	Critical realist paradigm
Ontology (belief about nature of truth and knowledge)	Reality is fact-based and absolute	Multiple realities exist and are socially constructed	Reality includes facts and artefacts as well as multiple understandings and interpretations of a single reality
Epistemology (how truth and knowledge can be obtained)	Knowledge is acquired by testing hypotheses and measuring results / observation (objectivist)	Knowledge is relative and reached through discourse and dialogue (constructivist)	Some knowledge can be absolute. At the same time, some knowledge can be relative. Epistemology should suit the research question(s).
Methods	Usually mathematical or statistical Based on (often formal) experimental designs Identified through case study, questionnaires, structured interviews or questionnaires of hypothesis to be tested	Wide variety e.g., descriptive case study using ethnology, unstructured interviews	Mainly qualitative techniques e.g., explanatory case study Diverse methods which suit the epistemology

Source: Adapted from: Fleetwood, S. (2014).

5.5.1 Research through a feminist lens

As I have described in section 1.2 (positionality) and as becomes ever more obvious in Chapter 6, I am personally and professionally deeply involved in women’s rights to know and exercise their rights. I have therefore adopted a feminist lens through which to critically examine IFAD’s educational policies and programmes for women in Yemen and the theories of education and international development which underpin such initiatives. The adoption of a feminist lens reflects my own positionality as well as the situation of some women working for IFAD or benefiting from its programmes. Political bodies including donor governments and major organisations from the World Bank and OECD to

international development organisations tend to be dominated by men, resulting in an imbalance of power (Metcalf and Rees 2010). This suggests that initiatives such as gender mainstreaming may be interpreted and implemented differently by men and women in those organisations. Thus, consideration from a feminist viewpoint may shed a particular light on the topic of this thesis.

As Tong (2008) has observed, there is no single theory of feminism although there is a shared goal of seeking to improve women's human rights and achieve gender equality, so it is helpful to clarify what I mean by my feminist lens. Over time, there have been a range of social and intellectual movements and theories which have been given various labels and the evolution of feminist thought continues. However, an individual woman is likely to develop her own understanding according to her life experiences. As Hannam (2007, p.11) asserts:

Feminists did not develop their ideas in a vacuum but had to engage with an existing framework of social and political thought – this in turn helped to shape the characteristics of feminism at different times and places.

Some of the situations which have influenced me and many other Yemeni women have already been described in sections 2.2 and 2.3.3. These have led me to focus on equal education and job opportunities for women who want them, equal pay for equal work, financial and legal independence and an end to male aggression and dominance (Jenainati 2003; Walters 2006), in agreement with liberal feminists. However, liberal feminists' belief that "individual women should be as free as men" (Weiner 1994, p. 53), including sexual freedoms and women's total control of their bodies, has been questioned by a number of other feminists. Eyadat (2013) has highlighted the differences between feminism in the west and the Islamic precept of 'equal but different'. The precept, which is found in the Qur'an, is rooted in a perception or belief that women have different personalities and qualities from men and these differences are a strength rather than a weakness. These differences could and should provide a collective advantage to the wider society, thus there is less emphasis on individual freedoms.

Whilst women from Islamic societies may share the principles of equality, respect and dignity, their life experiences are often too different for Western terms to simply be adopted and, if they are adopted, they do not carry the same meaning. For example, the principle of equality as found in the Qur'an strictly excludes

sexual freedom. The more radical feminist viewpoint also causes difficulty because it holds that men practise social control of women through direct and indirect mechanisms within the family, workplace, politics and religion. Many women would reject the idea of challenging religion or its representatives on earth, thus would not go as far as resisting and challenging all forms of oppression (Badran 2009) through “questioning every aspect of women’s lives” (Jenainati 2003, p. 101). Moreover, whilst many would absolutely recognise the problem of unequal power relationships between men and women, terms such as patriarchy or male domination do not take into account the existence of unequal power relationships between people of the same gender, of different tribes or social classes, or indeed within the various world balances of power. Women from some Arab cultures reject the idea of ‘male domination’, which they see as a Western expression that is unrelated to their experience which is formed by their history, cultural and tribal background as well as their religious perspective.

Similarly, the feminist thought which argues that oppression also results from class-based capitalism is less appropriate in those Arab economies where individual business people and politicians amass the money in a club whose membership often depends on tribal and family allegiances. The idea that “the division of labour and lack of support for working mothers defines women by their domestic responsibilities and excludes them from productive labour” (Jenainati 2003, p. 100) lacks meaning from an economic as well as a religious viewpoint for many women. Moreover, complementarity of male and female roles is grounded in a view of biological and emotional differences between the sexes which asserts that women’s nature is suitable for rearing children, but not for making political decisions. Complementarity was interpreted to mean that politics was the realm of men only.

Eyadat sums up the situation by stating:

International human rights norms can hardly be ignored, especially with regard to women’s rights, but western feminists act as neo-colonialists in their attempts to enforce their particular gender norms and aspirations on an entirely different society (2013, p. 362)

A female Muslim scholar, Seedat, offers a more nuanced evaluation of “Islamic feminism as a site of analysis and practice applicable to the lives of Muslim women” (2013, p. 404). She notes that some scholars “adopted a feminist

analysis, aligned it with critical readings on women in Islam, but did not classify their work as Islamic feminism” (2013, p. 406). Some women scholars have no problem with being called feminist but not ‘Islamic feminist’, while others have no difficulty in identifying as Islamic feminists. Seedat concludes her article by highlighting:

whether resisting the label feminist, resisting a convergence between Islam and feminism or doing feminism while taking Islam for granted, the dynamic between Islam and feminism is a potentially productive space from which to theorise modern Muslim gendered ways of being (2013, p. 420).

It is important in examining the way in which IFAD and its programmes aim to benefit women that I take into account the different understandings of feminism and offer a definition that adequately reflects my positionality as a researcher and the situation of the intended beneficiaries and of women working for IFAD to implement strategies and programmes. I describe this as a type of ‘respectful feminism’ which respects the rights of individual women to hold a different view from myself while pushing forward in the social sphere for greater equality so that they can exercise a wider range of choices if they so wish.

My ‘respectful feminism’ finds echoes in Khader’s views on the concept of adaptive preferences which asserts that women who accept poverty and abusive behaviour are necessarily participants in their own deprivation (Khader 2011). Khader argues that some Western feminist perceptions of adaptive preferences are based on “wellbeing-compatible preferences that are misunderstood because of cultural unfamiliarity” (Khader 2013, p. 312) and are essentially colonialist perceptions. In Yemen, some women may not send daughters to school because it is against cultural norms which are based on unjust practices, as suggested by Akala (2019) or they are unaware of their rights, whereas other women will appear to make the same decision but have very different reasons, such as no nearby school or no available transport (with associated safety concerns), or no money for shoes. These last reasons indicate rational decision-making rather than an adaptive preference. Moreover, adaptive preferences can change over time, as indicated by Teschl and Comim (2005). A mother’s decision about her daughter’s education may change, for example if attendance is associated with payment, a programme for sending daughters to school as mentioned by Arends-Kuenning and Amin (2001) or if conflict destroys a school or a road. An educated daughter may decide marriage offers greater financial security than employment

in a country like Yemen, a rational choice even in the context of unjust cultural norms. Additionally, the prolonged political turmoil and cycles of conflict in Yemen have resulted in what I term 'adapted change' rather than 'adaptive change', following Mitchell (2018) in her analysis of people's adaptation to a state of disability. Some women have become politically active in seeking change or peace before returning to acceptance of what may well be a harsher life, exemplifying the human quality of resilience.

It was important for me not to allow my personal feminism and often negative experiences of a highly patriarchal society to overwhelm my analysis and interpretation as a researcher. Critical realism, together with a capability approach framework, has offered a systematic way of separating my personal feelings and the multiple individual variants of feminism in individual Yemeni women from the gendered structural elements in the society.

5.6 Methodological Approach

Following Sikes (2004), I am using the term 'methodological approach' to describe the case study approach I have taken in my research and to explain and justify the methods of data collection I have used within the case study. Case study enables examination in depth of a specific phenomenon, typically in order to "furnish a multifaceted, individualized understanding of the people or objects being studied" (Thomas 1998, p. 9). As with many other terminologies in research, there is no single agreed definition of case study despite a large body of literature (Wellington 2015, p. 164). However, there is broad agreement regarding some of its features: empirical investigation of a particular phenomenon (Yin 2009; Robson 2011) with defined boundaries (Creswell 2002), a thick description to allow depth, subtleties and complexities to be revealed (Merriam 1988; Creswell 1998) and multiple sources of evidence (Stake 1995; Yin 2009).

I selected the Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Project run by IFAD in Yemen for my case study for several reasons. IFAD continued to operate in Yemen during a wave of protests and unrest when many other IDOs withdrew. For the new Government and its successors, IFAD projects represented a strand of continuity in the country's development agenda and plans. IFAD had a longer and more widespread experience of working with impoverished and remote communities in Yemen than many other international development organisations

and therefore potentially offered more insights into what makes an intervention effective, such as how women can be most effectively involved and the role of education in its agricultural projects. Moreover, IFAD offered a good opportunity to investigate the extent to which projects benefit women in poor agricultural communities, as it is stipulated that, in every project, 50% of beneficiaries should be women. Each IFAD programme contains a component intended for the benefit of women alone. This can take the form of literacy classes, capacity building, saving and credit activities, rural finance and income generation projects, and an individual project may contain one or more than one of these components.

One of the ways in which case studies have been classified is to consider them as descriptive, explanatory or exploratory and to relate the classification to the nature of the research question (Yin 2009). According to Yin, an explanatory case study approach is the most suitable for 'how' and 'why' questions as well as certain types of 'what' questions, such as my question about what further strategies could be adopted. Various data collection methods may be used in a case study, including interviews and analysis of documents (Sikes 2004). Whilst interviews are an indispensable source of information, a variety of methods and sources of information strengthens the case study (Yin 2009). The use of multiple methods helps to "secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 5). In order to gather the information needed to address my research questions and achieve my research objectives, I identified the relationship between the questions and the data collection methods, as suggested by Wellington (2000, p. 50) and shown in Table 5.2. Initially I decided to use semi-structured interviews and document analysis, and later introduced analytic autoethnography to add a valuable source of data. The balance between the methods varied according to the data being collected.

Documents provided insight into IFAD's stated programmes, policies and processes, together with outputs planned and achieved. They provided a view of their effectiveness in enabling rural women to develop their capabilities (research question 3) which could indicate potential challenges and barriers (research question 4) as well as allowing comparison with participants' perceptions given in the interviews (research question 5).

The interviews explored the perceived involvement of women in IFAD's processes for developing education and other initiatives (research question 2),

elicited perceived challenges and barriers to women's participation (research question 4) and invited suggestions for future strategies (research question 5). Participants were asked what they thought the IDO reasons were for intervention in Yemen in order to identify any positive or negative attitudes towards such interventions which could influence their other responses (research question 1). They were also asked a range of questions about their views of the effectiveness of policies, specific action for women including educational activities, and programme and project implementation (research question 3).

Autoethnography evidenced my own understanding and interpretation of findings from the documentary analysis and interviews from the position of someone who had worked on programmes and projects in Yemen, for the government and for IDOs, and who had experienced the challenges and barriers faced by many Yemeni women.

All three methods generated data for the different layers of reality posited by critical realism. Within the empirical layer, perceptions and experiences of participants were elicited, together with the perceptions and experiences of IFAD as a UN specialist agency designing and implementing policies set out in IFAD documents, and my own perceptions and experiences were added. Actions and events which constitute what critical realism terms the actual reality were referred to in both participant interviews and IFAD documents in addition to the key events related in my autoethnographic account. Finally, the 'real' unobservable underlying factors such as relationships between institutions, structures, cultural beliefs and powers were also accessed, mainly through analysing the language employed by participants and used in documents.

Table 5-2 Data collection methods to address research questions

Research Questions	Data Collection Methods		
	Documents	Interviews	Auto-ethnography
Question 1. What are the stated reasons as to why IFAD and other IDOs intervene in Yemen?	✓	✓	✓
Question 2. How are IFAD's processes for developing education and other initiatives perceived to involve women in rural communities in Yemen?	✓	✓	✓
Question 3. How effective are programmes, policies and education activities perceived to be in terms of developing the capabilities of women in rural communities in the Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Programme?	✓	✓	
Question 4. What challenges or barriers are considered to be faced by IFAD in seeking to ensure women's participation during the development project process?	✓	✓	✓
Question 5. What further strategies could be adopted to enhance the participation of women in educational activities within the targeted communities and expand their capabilities?	✓	✓	✓

The following sections provide more detail and justification of each of these data collection methods.

5.7 Documents

Whilst interviews are evidently a primary source of data, as is autoethnography in a different way, documents are a secondary source but one which is important to my thesis. O'Leary (2014) classifies documents into three main types: public records such as strategic plans and annual reports; personal documents such as reflective journals, emails and blogs; and physical objects (artefacts) such as training materials that are found in the research setting. Bowen (2009) proposes that a wide variety of documents should be collected but highlights that quality is more important than quantity. I carried out my document searches as small-scale literature searches, after which I used them to add broad information about my case study, in accordance with Bell (2014) and Yin (2014) but, more significantly, to investigate whether the policies and, to a lesser extent, the processes used by IFAD in Yemen created a framework which enabled women's participation and extended their capability. I selected relevant official documents concerning the Dhamar project together with government and IFAD policies, in addition to evaluation reports from IFAD and other IDOs. I know from my own experience in Yemen that the data in the Yemen reports was almost all collected by academics at the Centre of Studies and Research and the Women's Studies Centre in Sana'a. In this way, documents helped me to enrich and add value to other data.

Documents are a valid source of evidence in a case study (Yin 2014); they are useful for identifying: the public face of an organisation (how it chooses to present itself), processes and procedures for carrying out tasks, gathering facts which may not be available elsewhere and, critically, any discrepancies between what is said to be done and what is actually done.

5.8 Interviews

Research interviews can be broadly classified as structured, unstructured and semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews are more flexible than structured interviews and more controllable than unstructured interviews (Wellington 2015, p. 142). They avoid the constraints of a standard list of questions, asked of all interviewees without reference to their particular area of expertise or interest. They also avoid the possible loss of focus and control that inexperienced interviewers can find when they carry out unstructured interviews which follow the flow of thoughts much more freely. Semi-structured interviews offer the

researcher the flexibility to change the order and the wording of the interview questions if, for example, the person they are interviewing has already answered a question that was planned to be asked later (Denscombe 1998, p. 112). The researcher will typically have an interview guide, a list of areas to be explored with possible questions and probes associated with them, together with prompts to be used only where necessary to make sure that all important points are covered (Wellington 2015, pp. 145-146).

In the actual interview setting it becomes possible for researchers to face a particular situation in which the interview could deviate to a casual conversation at some point. This may enable people to reveal more of themselves and their feelings than they would in a more formal setting, which raises ethical concerns. For this reason, the researcher needs to keep the interview 'on track'. In any case, the researcher should strive to put participants at their ease to encourage the flow of information and ideas (Cohen et al. 2005). Before, during and after the interviews, it is essential for the researcher to bear in mind the research aims and objectives, while maintaining confidentiality, trust, interest and a non-judgmental attitude (Cohen et al. 2005; Silverman 2005).

I initially adopted in-depth semi-structured interviews as the most appropriate technique for gathering the data I needed, using the interview guide shown in Appendix A and giving interviewees space and time to express their views and experiences on the topic in detail where they wished to do so, following Denzin and Lincoln (2000). The interviews enabled me to access a rich and valuable space of people's subjective experiences, knowledge and attitudes, reaching information which would otherwise remain beyond reach as indicated by Peräkylä (2005, p. 869).

I phrased the questions in my interview guide in very general terms to allow for the fact that 11 of my participants were less familiar with IFAD and the Dhamar project than IFAD project staff although they all had valuable information to offer. For example, some talked about what happened in other areas of Yemen, countrywide, in various countries or about a particular aspect of my study such as the situation of women or the links between IFAD or Dhamar or rural development and the work of ministries. In the actual interviews, I was prepared to ask IFAD participants specific questions about Dhamar but found that they mostly answered in terms of the Dhamar project or IFAD or Yemen, as

appropriate. Consultants and ministry staff responded in a similar way, according to their own background and experience. Moreover the interview guide is exactly that, a guide to ensure all topics are covered, allowing questions to be phrased differently and other questions to be asked.

Due to the risks to participants and myself in Yemen, as the political crisis escalated and it became increasingly obvious that safety could not be guaranteed, I had to use Skype and telephone interviews in addition to face-to-face interviews. Telephone interviews are accepted as “an important method of data collection” (Cohen et al. 2007, p. 379) and, at worst, “are -not better or worse than those conducted face-to-face” (Miller 1995, p. 37). It would have been foolish and reckless of me to risk my life in Yemen, and perhaps the life of more than one participant, when, as reported by Opdenakker (2006) and Phellas et al. (2011), the physical safety of the interviewer is not at risk during a telephone interview.

In addition to enabling access to people in locations of political sensitivity or physical danger, telephone/Skype interviews can save considerable time and cost, especially in terms of travel (Bampton et al. 2013). However, I discovered some of the potential disadvantages of these methods of data collection; I experienced a lack of telephone coverage in some areas and especially a lack of internet access in Yemen because of the frequent power outages there.

The difficult connections and safety risks combined with the very busy working lives of the participants meant that I had to conduct some of the interviews in several sessions. In one way this was not ideal but on the other hand it gave me opportunities to think about what I had already been told and to ask additional questions.

During my fieldwork, as many interviews as possible were recorded onto a digital recorder, with the consent of the participant. Recordings have important advantages, such as allowing me to focus on the interview process and what participants were saying rather than taking notes. Recordings allowed me to listen to what was said many times, not just for the purpose of transcription but to clarify what was said and the context and tone of voice in which answers were given, as Silverman (2005) proposed. This was invaluable during the data analysis process. However, power outages meant it was not always possible to record

every exchange except by making notes and checking with the participant that my notes accurately reflected what they had said. Some participants asked to put their considered responses in writing after the interview.

I have kept a journal for as long as I can remember, so it came naturally to me to use field notes and a research diary to record the processes and specific situations, points of culture, behaviours and other relevant information during my fieldwork. These were helpful in highlighting meaning in context as well as distinguishing between the voices of my participants and myself as researcher when I was writing up the analysis and findings (Woods 1999; Wellington 2000). I wrote about what I had seen and heard, noting down my reactions and my thoughts about it, in accordance with Silverman (2005, p. 175) who contends that field notes need to be extended “beyond immediate observations”.

5.8.1 Pilot interviews

I conducted pilot interviews before the fieldwork in order to test the suitability of my research instrument. Piloting interviews is important in order to determine the length of the questions, the level of formality and the method of addressing questions (Lincoln and Guba 1985) and to give the researcher an early warning about possible areas in which the research could fail (Van Teijlingen and Hundley 2001). Ambiguity, confusion and any insensitivity in the questions can be removed and potential problems resolved (Wellington 2000; Bryman 2008). Based on these perspectives, I conducted four individual pilot interviews and asked participants for feedback. Although my focus was on the clarity, length and content of the questions, the most important observations of the participants were more personal issues. The level of my voice was considered too low and could be deemed lacking in confidence. The second comment was that greater clarity was needed in the information sent in advance about the project, the purpose of the interview, the interview process, the interview time and the rights of the participants. I was also advised not to follow numerical sequencing of questions, should the content of a later question have already been covered. In a few cases, I was advised to improve my control of the interview process by rewording some of my questions to make the meaning clear and by keeping to the topic when I needed to clarify something. Improvements concerned, as Robson said (2002, p.164), “clarifying unclear sentences or phrases, filling in the missing steps and keeping the conversation on topic” (Robson 2002, p. 164). I amended my

interview guide and interviewing style to take on board the relevant comments and suggestions in order to make the interview process more flexible and responsive.

During the fieldwork it immediately became clear that I needed more data and that some participants wanted to spend more time sharing their knowledge and experiences with me, so I planned further questions and arranged follow-up sessions with them. These were mainly loosely structured interviews (rather than completely unstructured) with varying degrees of formality and were in some instances enormously important in terms of the data collected. I would call these exchanges follow-up interviews and discussions, most of which were based on exploring additional relevant areas of participants' role, experience or expertise. These included: the impact of the Arab Spring revolution in 2011; short-term consultancy contracts and evaluations; the relationship between project design and implementation; the voice of grassroots communities in relation to success stories; the impact of international loans in relation to government policy and responsibility; and government policies regarding adult education, community development and women empowerment in local communities. Areas discussed and questions asked during these follow-up interviews are given in Appendix A.

5.9 Autoethnography as Research Method

I used autoethnography as a method in the case study for several reasons. Firstly, I was finding difficulty in separating the data I collected from participants and official documents from my own experience, knowledge and feelings about the phenomenon I was investigating. I became very confused during an initial attempt at data analysis until I realised that it would become easier (but not easy) if I could see more clearly where and how my voice was affecting my research. Secondly, I knew my work and life experiences were significant in terms of understanding the complexity of the research context. I knew they needed a space of their own but was not sure how and where to give them this space. This is why I describe autoethnography as a 'rescuer'. Finally, in order to allow space for my own experiences to enrich any or all of the aspects of the thesis where they could add value, I separated the use of autoethnographic method in the case study from a strand which I wove into the whole thesis. I have provided my autoethnographic data separately in Chapter 6.

Autoethnography can be considered as a methodology or method (e.g. Ellis et al. 2011; Hughes and Pennington 2017). It can be used by researchers as a qualitative tool to support their analysis: their experiences of a research process; and their own and participants' experiences, including the researcher's experience during fieldwork. It can deepen and enhance understanding of the phenomenon which is being explored (Ellis and Bochner 2000; Maso 2001; Foster et al. 2006). Autoethnography is defined by Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 739) as "an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural". At this point it is appropriate for me to take a brief step back to explore my reasons for employing autoethnography and how it has been used in my research.

5.9.1 Coming to autoethnography

My choice of autoethnography as one of the methods for this research arises from the flexible space that the method offers for sharing the researcher's knowledge and personal and interpersonal experiences. I always feel I have something to share and contribute in my area of study and autoethnography is a rescuer. I was introduced to this approach during one of my supervision meetings, with the suggestion to have a go and read about it and answer the question 'how am I going to apply autoethnography in my research?'. Once I started reading, I could not stop digging deeper, to know more and understand autoethnography more fully. Although I had developed my knowledge to a good level regarding many research methodologies and methods, autoethnography was new. For me, autoethnography is like an art, fine art and needs an artist to use it. I am not an artist, but I love arts and I can easily feel it from inside. That is me, I love arts in general; fine arts, photography, poems, classical music and engraving my feeling on any paper, napkins or even on paper from empty tea packets. This has grown with me since I was at school, much more so after the death of my mother when I was a little girl. I can feel why I love writing in my diary or on anything close to my hands. It is a form of therapy, a self-therapeutic approach that I have used to save me or what was left of me after a particularly bad experience. During my non-stop stress and overthinking about events in Yemen, health problems and distressing experiences in life, I slipped towards my vulnerable and emotional corner when I revealed some of my memories. This feeling is the same feeling that I developed during my reading about and around autoethnography. The

feeling managed to chain me, making it very difficult to start my writing task as required by my supervisor. I am sure it was not only because of the reading but because I felt I was engaging more deeply with the details of my reading, reading between the lines and positioning myself as at the centre of others' experience. I wondered what was between those lines that made me feel that way. It was me and my experience between those lines. My engagement with my reading around autoethnography was to visualise everything I read. For example, I read Ellis and Bochner chapter *Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Research as Subject* and I read it again. It was not a typical chapter, full of academic terms. Through my second visit to chapter, I spent more time as I was curiously listening to the conversation between Sylvia and her supervisor Ellis as if it was between me and my supervisor, as early on I pictured myself in Sylvia's position, especially in this scenario:

Sylvia: "How will the chapters look and where will my story be?" she asks, this time seriously.

Ellis: The form will evolve during the research process. You might start the dissertation with a short personal story, to position yourself for the reader, or tell your longer story as a chapter. Or you might integrate parts of your experience into each participant's story each of which could form separate chapters. Or write your story in comparison to one of the participants who is similar to you, as Christine Kiesinger did in her study of eating disorders". Ellis continues offering other options to Sylvia (Ellis and Bochner 2000, p. 158).

However, I am not Sylvia and this thesis is not about me. It is not about my problems, but it is about challenges that are part of my experience throughout my life journey. However, the main purpose for adopting autoethnography is the fact that my voice and work experience will be shared along with other participants when it is important to do so. Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 742) describe autoethnography as:

autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation.

However, for me as a researcher it is important to build a transparent wall between my own private and personal experience and my research project. For this reason, although I now position myself as an autoethnography supporter, I am aware of some important objections to autoethnography. It is argued that researchers neglect their duty if they avoid data collection:

Academics in the developed world who get salaries that allow them to do research have a moral obligation to gather data, analyse them and publish the results. Scholars are paid from public funds to get out of the university to do research in the world (Delamont 2009, p. 60).

Autoethnography is also criticised as being like writing an autobiographical novel, which can rightly be claimed as fiction but not as research (Walford 2004). The use of an approach which is “always a story about the past and not the past itself” (Ellis and Bochner 2000, p. 745) is defended on the basis that it offers a wider lens through which to view the world than the traditional predominantly white male perspective, at the same time recognising that an acceptance of multiple views of the world (‘truths’) allows the existence of narrative truth (Ellis et al. 2010). Furthermore, as Jones, Adams and Ellis (2016) have pointed out, certain characteristics of autoethnography distinguish it from personal writing in general. These, which I intend to show in my work, are:

- (1) purposefully commenting on/critiquing of culture and cultural practices,
- (2) making contributions to existing research, (3) embracing vulnerability with purpose, and (4) creating a reciprocal relationship with audiences in order to compel a response (Jones et al. 2016, p. 22).

A further objection is that autoethnographic research can be seen to be characterised by self-obsession and lacking “analytic mileage”, failing to offer anything of interest to social science (Delamont 2009, p. 58). My response to the last two criticisms is related to my relationship to photography and fine art, as sometimes I ask myself why some people cannot feel what a picture wants to tell them. I do not consider the artist or the observer as failing to offer anything of interest, but rather question the ability of the observer to make a connection between their feeling and the object.

Autoethnography offers the possibility of challenging the accepted order and power hierarchy by:

- creating a space for people (as individuals, as possessors of certain social characteristics, and as members of particular socio-cultural groups) to describe their perceptions and experiences and to express their views, beliefs and values rather than being re-presented and interpreted by others as has tended to be the case (Sikes 2013, p. 8).

Delamont, as a traditional sociologist, worries about the target groups, particularly those she terms ‘the powerless’, as she sees autoethnography as focusing on ‘powerful’ people, which she regards as “an abuse of the sociologists’ ‘privileges” (2007, pp. 96, 100). In contrast, Sikes (2013) suggests that it can give less

powerful individuals a voice. Moreover, it can be argued that it is more honest and transparent for researchers to acknowledge they are, or become, part of the phenomenon they are investigating (Adams et al. 2015).

There are many forms of autoethnography, of which two are considered here: evocative and analytic. For the purpose of this research I adopted analytic autoethnography in order to avoid my emotional account that I did not believe would add value. Evocative autoethnography tends to focus chiefly on difficult experiences which can be emotionally challenging, even devastating, whereas analytic autoethnography entails dialogue with other people and analysis rooted in theory (Anderson 2006). Anderson proposes three further key features, namely: the researcher is fully involved in the research, can be seen to be present and actively engaged in the text, and uses reflexivity to explore the mutual influence of researcher, participants and context on each other (2006). My research required me to be analytical rather than emotional.

Anderson (2006, p. 384) states that:

Autoethnographers should expect to be involved in the construction of meaning and values in the social worlds they investigate. As full-fledged members, they cannot always sit observantly on the sidelines. They should not necessarily shy away from participating in potentially divisive issues.

Analytic autoethnography enables me to make good use of my experience; merging my experiences with data collected from other sources creates a deeper understanding of the issues around the topic of study. I am not telling my personal story for the sake of participation; on the contrary, I have been specific and careful where and when my voice is needed. I collected data from participants and documents to interpret and explore; this means I am not the centre of this project, but I am both the subject (to some extent) and the researcher. I consider myself as an 'extra value' voice that comes from the same culture and background, with related and relevant work experience. I believe my relationship with my research project is valuable and necessary for the area of my study, as a woman who shares some of the life experiences of some of the women working for IFAD, and as a Yemeni. A woman in my culture is unlikely to be who she wants to be unless a unique support is given to her within her close circle, or extra support that is available from some non-governmental organisations who truly believe in

women's rights even if these organisations work under or within the government umbrella. Therefore, my voice is represented with caution. As Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 738) warn:

The vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you've written or having any control over how readers interpret what you've written. It's hard not to feel your life is being critiqued.

I believe that my skill in non-academic writing will help me to not sound as if I am diving under my skin and trying to point to others as a web of corrupt people working in the government sector or in NGOs whether local or international. As my aim is positive change, I academically critique and analyse the reality as I experienced it during my field work and the time when worked in international development. I have used key events and formative episodes in my personal journey through life in Yemen which I believe contribute to the particular focus of my thesis and give the reader a real insight into who I am. I have presented these mainly in chronological order but ended with a reflection on my experience of education.

5.10 Sampling Procedures

I chose my participants carefully, in accordance with Denscombe (1998, p. 119), on the basis of their position, their policy or financial contribution to programmes or projects, or other unique contribution or insight. I say that they were carefully selected, but in practice I had to reach potential participants through a snowball sampling technique. According to Robson (2002, p. 265-266), snowball sampling is a non-probability method whereby the researcher initially identifies "one or more individuals from the population of interest" who are asked after their own interview "to identify other members of the population". I was fortunate in having established a personal network of professionals in Yemen in earlier times. After several attempts I managed to secure successful connections with the IFAD office in Yemen, having several conversations before sending them an official invitation. During one of these conversations, IFAD offered to refer me to the rest of the participants who were working in its offices in Yemen and Italy. My intention was to interview up to 20 participants who were experts in their particular roles; of the eighteen who agreed to take part, two subsequently withdrew. The final 16 were selected according to their different organisational roles and relevant experience, as presented in Table 5.3. Most participants refused permission for

their names or any demographic data to be used because it would make them too easily identifiable; in the circumstances, it would have been unethical to use any such data and the University Ethics Committee had already flagged up concerns about this (Appendix B). For similar reasons, I have avoided mention of gender except where permission was given and it was necessary to understanding the meaning or importance of quotes in the analysis of interviews. The number and type of contacts with each participant, together with the total contact time, is shown in Table 5.4. The differences in the time I spent with different participants are due to the varying depth and nature of their experience.

One of the participants offered me the chance to visit some beneficiaries of IFAD's programme in Dhamar which would have been a bonus, but the situation in the country was too dangerous for me to travel there safely at that time.

Table 5-3 Participant profiles

	Role	IFAD Y/N	Relevant experience (Y/N)		
			Country Head Office	Field	Country Strategic Plan
1	Country Programme Officer/ Economist	Y	Y	Y	Y
2	Country Programme Assistant	Y	Y	Y	Y
3	Government input into agricultural projects	N		Y	N
4	Social Fund for Development input into rural projects	N		Y	Y
5	Social Fund for Development / Dharmar project	Y		Y	Y
6	Economist / national consultant	N		Y	N
7	Rural development specialist / country programme analyst	Y	Y	Y	Y
8	Programme specialist (rural development, livelihoods & natural resource management)	Y	Y	Y	Y
9	Community development and gender consultant, project coordination experience	Y	Y	Y	Y
10	Vocational Educational and Training Institute	N		Y	N
11	Academic researcher, gender and development	N		Y	N
12	Women's issues researcher psychologist / counsellor	N		Y	N
13	Community projects specialist	N		Y	N
14	International consultant, development projects	N		Y	N
15	International consultant, development projects	N		Y	N
16	Illiteracy Eradication and Adult Education	N		N	Y

Table 5-4 Number, type and times of contacts with participants

Participant no.	Number of contacts			Type(s) of contact	Total contact time
	1-2	3-5	6-8		
1			8	face-to-face and follow up interview, further loosely structured discussions, emails, texts, international phone calls	>10 hours
2		4		face-to-face interview, follow up interview, further loosely structured discussions	<3 hours
3		3		international phone calls, face to face interview	<2 hours
4		4		emails, Facebook chats, international phone calls, interview*	<2 hours
5		4		emails, Facebook chats, international phone calls, interview*	<2 hours
6	2			international phone calls, face to face interview*	<2 hours
7		3		emails, Skype and follow up interview	<2 hours
8		4		emails, chats, face-to-face interview, follow up interview	>2 hours
9			7	emails, chats, international phone calls, interview, follow-up interview	>2 hours
10	2			international phone calls, face to face interview*	<2 hours
11		5		international phone calls, face to face loosely structured/follow up interviews **	>6 hours
12		5		international phone calls, face to face loosely structured interviews **	>6 hours
13	2			international phone calls, face to face interview*	<2 hours
14	1			face to face interview*	1 hour
15	1			face to face interview*	1 hour
16		3		international phone calls, face to face interview*	1 hour

Notes: * not audio recorded **partial audio recording

5.11 Data collection

There were three stages of data collection, the first carried out in Sheffield between October 2012 and July 2013, and the second in the field in Yemen from July 2013 to October 2013. The third was my autoethnographic contribution, written in 2019 (Chapter 6). The DPRDP was scheduled to run from 2004-2012 but started and ended late, with minimal beneficiary participation in planning prior to the selection of target village units. The more fully participatory aspects of the programme, which form the core of my case study, were implemented after 79 village units were mobilised in the period 2006/2007 and 89 more in 2008/2010. This meant that activities were still taking place when I carried out my fieldwork, enabling me to obtain participant perspectives which were informed by almost the whole lifetime of the programme. The situation in Yemen has deteriorated since the fieldwork was completed but the analysis, issues and recommendations remain relevant because development programmes will start again, probably with the same issues and difficulties, and possibly with rural women finding themselves in a worse position than before. My autoethnographic account is as pertinent now as it was when the fieldwork was carried out.

In the first stage, I conducted two telephone interviews with national and international experts who stated their preference for giving their final responses in writing, to be emailed to me. A Skype interview was conducted with the IFAD's Head Office representative based in Italy. This was secured after many delays, conversations and discussions while the individual was in Rome and eventually took place while the person was in Tunisia. In order to avoid any further delay, I decided to be proactive and made the choice to travel to Yemen.

The particular difficulties surrounding the second stage of data collection in Yemen can be summarised as an absence of safety and security following political upheaval which only got worse during the period when I was collecting data. Moreover, I had not expected the processes of finding UN agency locations and arranging times and dates for interviews to be as difficult and challenging as it was.

An Arabic proverb kept coming to my mind:

ما كل ما يتمناه المرء يدركه تأتي الرياح بما لا تشتهي السفن
(ta'ti r-riyaaH bi-ma la taštahi s-sufun)

Winds do not blow as the ships wish. (You can't always get what you want.)

I conducted sixteen interviews with participants from IFAD, both international and national development workers, and relevant government departments. I also collected documentation from the Yemeni Women's Committee Office (relevant publications, reports and conference papers) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the Ministry of Education (Adult Learning and Vocational Training sections) and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (relevant documents and reports).

5.12 Data analysis

Data analysis consists of “examining, categorising, tabulating, testing or otherwise recombining the evidence to draw empirically based conclusions” (Yin 2009, p. 126). Its purpose is “the search for explanation and understanding, in the course of which concepts and theories are likely to be advanced, considered and developed” (Blaxter et al. 2006, p. 206). The specific method used to analyse the various sources of data is described at the start of each of the data analysis chapters 7, 8 and 9.

The challenge for me was to find a way of bringing together the findings from the various data sources without losing their richness or their theoretical implications. I initially used thematic analysis for the interviews and follow-up conversations, discussions and informal exchanges, employing a combination of themes from the literature review, themes from the analysis of IFAD policies and processes, and themes emerging from the participant responses in the interviews. I then situated these in the capability approach framework to be able to identify which elements were missing from the framework to enable rural Yemeni women to be able to extend their capabilities. Moreover, analysis based on the capability approach allowed me to look at my own experience from a safe distance whereas thematic analysis brought too much personal bias into this data and hence back into the other data.

Documentary texts should be analysed in the light of any barriers or biases of purpose, culture and language, including those of the researcher (O’Leary 2014).

Various methods have been proposed, such as policy analysis, discourse analysis and thematic analysis. The method of data analysis needs to suit the document and the purpose of the research, which led me to adopt the suggestion of Goerne (2010) for examining whether social policy takes account of capability. Coffey (2014) highlights that it is important to identify the form, function, linguistic features and any other relevant properties of documents. I analysed the documents from these perspectives but, most importantly, analysed policies and reports to identify whether they promoted and facilitated the extension of individual capabilities. Data analysis and findings from the documents provided a form of triangulation of the data from the interviews.

I also applied a thematic analysis approach to my autoethnographic data as proposed by Maydell (2010), so that I could clearly see where and how themes in my data were similar to, or different from, those of my participants. I deliberately carried out reflexive analysis of the autoethnographic section separately so that I did not get too confused.

Thematic analysis as used in my analysis of interview transcripts and autoethnographic account is a step-by-step process of identifying and analysing patterns in data; the steps need to be followed carefully and in sequence (Braun and Clarke 2006; Wellington 2015). I followed the six stages proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 16-23): familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally, producing the report. In practice, I found the process was not linear but iterative. Moreover, although the stages appeared quite straightforward, I found it extremely challenging to link the data back to theoretical concepts. Not all the themes I initially identified related to the conceptual framework of the capability approach, although the capability approach framework offered a more useful as well as a more critical method of data analysis than more commonly-used forms of thematic analysis in terms of identifying areas for improvement because it facilitated thinking about the links between international and national institutions, civil society organisations, the individuals who work in them and beneficiaries of the programmes and projects they design and administer. Finally, I combined the findings from these analyses into the thematic analysis based on the capability approach and included all the data: documents, interviews and autoethnographic data. Details of the data analysis

processes involved are given at the start of each of the three chapters which analyse the findings (chapters 7, 8 and 9).

5.13 Research Quality

It is the researcher's responsibility to assure the quality of the research (Yin, 2011). In contrast to typically used statistical measurements of validity and reliability in quantitative research, alternative measures of quality have been suggested for qualitative case studies. Wellington (2015) has argued that validity in a qualitative study means that the study is able to investigate what it is supposed to investigate. Guba and Lincoln (1994) have proposed measuring 'trustworthiness' using four criteria: confirmability, credibility, dependability and transferability. Confirmability and credibility have often been demonstrated by triangulation (cross-checking) of methods of collection and sources of data. In my research, findings from interviews, documents and autoethnography were cross-checked. Other methods of assuring credibility have been proposed, including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, progressive subjectivity, peer debriefing and member checks (Guba and Lincoln 1989; Merriam 2009). I achieved persistent observation and member checks through follow up discussions and invitations to read drafts and give feedback, as recommended by Stake (1995), while separation of data analysis of my autoethnographic content and reflexive analysis made my subjective elements clear to the reader.

Reliability usually refers to being able to repeat study findings if another researcher follows the same method (Ritchie and Lewis 2003) but this is not suitable for a case study which seeks to investigate a unique phenomenon. According to Bell (2014), it may be more important and useful to assess the value of a case study by considering the extent to which a person involved in a similar situation could apply the information to assist their own decision-making. 'Relatability' may be more important than 'generalisability' in case study research.

In addition, in terms of peer debriefing, I presented my research at various stages in 2012, 2013 and 2014 to colleagues and academics in the research community of researchers. I welcomed the opportunities to answer questions and receive feedback.

5.13.1 Note on Translation

Interviews with IFAD staff were conducted in English; others were conducted in Arabic. The quality of translation can affect the research findings and be affected by the background, views, cultural understanding and linguistic competence of the translator (Temple 1997). I met most of these requirements but chose to involve a native English speaker after translation to make sure that the translated data were faithful to the meaning of the original. Another widely used technique, known as back translation, involves initial translation into the target language, then doing an independent translation back into the original language, after which the two versions are compared and amended until there is an agreed version of ambiguous and different meanings (Ercikan 1998). However, the agreed version can be slightly different from both the original and translated versions. Thus, I preferred to use a native English speaker who was willing to discuss the meaning of any unclear language in the translated version and add clarification where essential.

5.14 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this research was granted by the University of Sheffield's ethical review panel. British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines (2011, p. 5) state that "all educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom". I obtained the informed consent of my participants by providing them with the necessary information about the research, including any unforeseeable risk or inconvenience that they might encounter (consent form at Appendix C). Participation was voluntary and participants were free to withdraw at any time, as in fact two of them did. Issues of maintaining anonymity and confidentiality were raised by the ethical review panel at an early stage of this research and were considered afresh after the adoption of autoethnography. In theory, the participant consent form assures the anonymity and confidentiality of their contributions but, as Hennink et al. (2011, p. 71) argue, "in qualitative research, it is difficult to assure complete confidentiality because researchers report the study findings and ... quotations are often included in these reports". At the start of each interview, I sought permission to use demographic data such as job titles, qualifications and age. All but two participants agreed to give these details on condition they would not be used in the thesis. I discussed this with my supervisor at that time and contacted participants again to try to obtain permission to use their job

titles and names if this were required at some point; almost everyone refused to give consent because they were concerned about possible repercussions in the culturally and politically sensitive setting (section 5.10 refers). Providing fuller demographic details and giving fictional names would potentially have increased the risk of identification of individuals. I have therefore used very broad job roles and avoided details of involvement in particular initiatives or of employing organisations where these would enable identification (Table 5.3). On balance it was felt more important to produce research which was potentially useful to practitioners and policy makers by using the data but withholding participant details than not to use the data at all. To have used the data and included participant details would have breached the rights of the participants. Permission to use the photographs of IFAD's work with women contained in this thesis was granted orally by IFAD's country manager in order to support the research.

I have also applied ethical guidance to my autoethnographic contribution. I have done this in two ways, firstly by defending my privacy in terms of what data I choose to disclose as data, on the same basis as participants' rights to disclose information (Sikes 2006). Where my personal memories include other people, I have not used names in order to minimise the risk of identification, although I would be happy to show anyone who was referred to in the events. tensions in areas such as confidentiality. Secondly, my autoethnographic contribution added to my positionality in making my own role and views in the research very explicit by illuminating my insider position.

Although concerns for my own safety and well-being could be considered ethical considerations, I have chosen to mention them under the heading of challenges.

5.15 Challenges

In my view, doing research in Yemen was a challenge in itself. Political and economic turbulence were increasing along with social unrest, difficult living conditions and a consequent lack of safety. The challenges were both academic and personal. My physical and psychological health were adversely affected by concerns for my home country, my family and friends. Political conflict in Yemen played a massive role in limiting access to participants. Notably, a key participant helped me to reach interviews by e-mailing twenty invitations to individuals who potentially had a valuable contribution to make to the research. Although I received seventeen replies showing

interest in participating, there was no response after that initial contact despite my repeated attempts to communicate with them. Travelling to and around Yemen was financially very difficult, in addition to the safety concerns in a country deemed hazardous at the time of the fieldwork as also highlighted in sections 5.8 and 5.10.

I found the autoethnography was very challenging; even writing about events that I did not think would make me feel emotional was at times overwhelming because they triggered so many other memories and feelings that I would have preferred not to recall. This also made it difficult for me to keep the autoethnographic contribution focused on the research topic. Data analysis presented a different kind of challenge, firstly to try to identify and bring together themes in all three sources of data, with particular difficulty in separating analysis of the autoethnographic detail, in other words the content, from reflexivity, which concerned reflecting on the research process and what I had learned about myself through the process. I also found it hard to tie the findings to the theory, perhaps because in my professional life I was used to writing project and programme evaluation reports, which did not require consideration of theory.

5.16 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the research design and methodology in detail, justifying the use of the critical realism paradigm, supported with a case study using qualitative data collection methods: documentation, autoethnography and interviews, especially semi-structured interviews with follow-up unstructured interviews. I have explained why autoethnography was chosen as a unifying thread running through the thesis as well as for a separate data chapter to enrich the case study. The process of data analysis using thematic analysis to combine findings from the capability approach analysis, while reporting reflexive and reflective analysis separately, has been explained. Ethical concerns and challenges have been addressed, explaining how all but two participants refused consent to use their job roles and names where anonymity and confidentiality could not be assured due to the possibility of identification from the text. The autoethnographic data avoided the use of situations in which the individuals could be identified by their contribution since there were many similar events and stories I could have used. References have also been made to the challenges of undertaking fieldwork in an environment of increasing political instability and physical danger.

Chapter 6 Family Influence and Culture Challenge

I was born in Ethiopia where my mother was born too, but in my passport, it states place of birth 'Yemen'. I will tell you why later. My mother was the youngest daughter of my grandmother. My mother had 10 children, three girls and seven boys; I was the youngest one. My maternal grandmother's family moved to Ethiopia after the Second World War and lived there all their life. In the early 1970s my father left us in Ethiopia when my mother was still pregnant and moved to Yemen. In his village in Yemen, he created a new family, bought a new house and a large plot of land, married a new young wife, then had two daughters. In Ethiopia, my grandmother became the head of the family; she worked and looked after us until she decided to move to Yemen in the early 1970s. We lived in a city in southwestern Yemen while my father and his other family lived in his village until his death. Unfortunately, I do not remember much about my parents as both died while I was young. My father had left me when I was two years old, and as for my mother, I had few memories of her as she passed away when I was in primary school after she lost her mother, her husband and her elder son, my big brother. She was a strong woman like her mother but sadly she was diagnosed with cancer. My brother took her to Egypt for treatment where she started chemotherapy but doctors there advised her to go back home to spend the last few days with her family as her cancer was in its advanced stage. The second strong woman lost in the end, but both my grandmother and my mother still live inside me and my memory. Luckily for me, I was the only girl to continue my studies and reject the traditional idea of 'the future of a girl is in her husband's paradise'.

I have raised an issue about my place of birth. As I mentioned, I was born in Ethiopia but in my ID, it says 'Yemen'. This is related to an aspect of social and cultural racism we in Yemen have experienced in the past and nowadays. My family's skin colour is not dark, nor is mine. We look like ordinary Yemeni people; however, because we were born in Ethiopia, people would assume that we are not Yemenis, or we are mixed-race with black African heritage. To be a mixed-race person is not considered an issue in Yemen in particular or within Arab culture in general, as the Qur'an tells us we are all equal, but in practice it limits a person's opportunities of better chances in employment and social life. Actually, mixed race is an advantage if it is with white, particularly European, heritage. However, to avoid criticism for having migrated to Africa rather than the West and questioning of our origins, all my family members have

Yemen and the name of my father's village as their place of birth. When I asked why, my family said, 'it is better and easier for your future'. Evidently, to be criticised as a girl is less challenging than to be judged as a girl with a dark skin colour.

One-person Journey

I moved to England by the end of 2004 where Sheffield is my fourth home city after Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, followed by Taiz and Sanaa in Yemen. I am the only girl in my family who fought hard to finish school and enrol in university. As a girl of sixteen I was expected to follow the 'silk-road' of my mother, sisters and all girls of my age in my tribe, but I did not. I chose a rough and long pathway to independence and to going further with my education. My family left me with no financial support. They challenged me for wanting to go to university. I had to earn my own income and support myself. I was not unique in my society in being faced with a limited and tight choice; this was the situation of nearly every girl in my society particularly those who had no family support, whatever their social class or educational level.

I worked full time. I moved from my family home and in 1998, I obtained my first degree from the Faculty of Commerce and Economics, the University of Sana'a.

My Experience Outside the Safe Box

My safe box was my little world in my small room in my brother's house. I used to feel safer in the vicinity of textbooks, reading novels and books and writing my memoirs quietly. However, to move forward I had to go out and explore the wider world. This is where the advanced stage of my journey began. After working for more than ten years, I made a conscious decision to resign and become actively involved in community and charitable work, particularly work focusing on women's issues. I became progressively more interested in developing my knowledge and understanding of women's rights. I travelled to Lebanon where I trained as a professional gender and development trainer. My passion about women's rights increased until it reached a level where it became questioned by others. Family, other women I met socially and professionally, as well as men, did not think it was appropriate for a Yemeni woman to support and advocate for women in this way. Before getting involved in women's issues at the professional level, I worked in various positions including as a Coordinator of the United Nations Association of Yemen (UNA-Yemen) and a Senior Director of one of the World Bank projects in the country.

I gained interesting experience working as Financial and Administrative Manager in one of the UNDP economic and administrative reform programmes based in and supervised by the Office of the Prime Minister. I was the only woman to hold such positions at the time. After resigning from my last job with development programmes, I became a professional freelance trainer, working with many national and international organisations. My work included the design of three published books, two of which were: guidelines in cartoon and sign language form for people with disabilities on accessing their right to vote, and guidelines for awareness raising of health issues. The third, which was fully funded by CARE International, aimed to enable women to develop and start their own income generation projects.

Through this journey, I have become a campaigner for girls' educational rights. I therefore possess a strong belief that education, particularly quality education, is one of the key tools that help to improve people's lives. For me, education is about nothing if it is not about developing and empowering girls and effectively resulting in narrowing the gender gap. Educating girls is not just for the transmission of knowledge; importantly, it provides "a space for women in which the process of such discovery and learning builds up their confidence and their empowerment" (Hughes and Kennedy, 1985 cited in Coats 1994, p. 23).

Feminist Thought in a Conservative Society

Access to education is not the only challenge that girls can face in a conservative society like Yemen. I personally experienced numerous difficulties, particularly with men, whether they were family members or in the workplace. I managed to overcome most of the challenges other than those related to my health. As a women's rights activist and feminist, I do not label my feminism though with one particular feminist approach. From the early stages of my life, I struggled because I was a girl in a society which believes strongly in gender differences. However, as I always say, "my life would be easier if I was a boy, but I am very proud to be me and to have become an independent woman". My life experience has taught me to stand against men's oppression and patriarchal system. I stand with girls and women's rights in my home country and everywhere. Women deserve to be treated with respect and dignity regardless of their social or ethnic background as long as they respect others equally. In life people, and especially women, have experienced a lot and it is not appropriate to judge others based on personal assumptions.

Despite my difficulties in completing my bachelor's degree, my aspirations have been transformed into higher education for the purpose of expanding my knowledge, particularly about women's issues. This interest led me to obtain my first university certificate in women's studies from the University of Sheffield. My work experience with development organisations and the government sector was another strong motivation that encouraged me to extend my education to PhD level in order to explore and understand the role of international development organisations and their credibility regarding women's rights and opportunities. It is my cherished hope that the experience and enthusiasm I have will make this a fulfilling and rewarding experience.

Yemeni women and Tamkeen (تَمْكِين)

I was nearly ready to shift my work experience to an advanced level. I believed that the skills and knowledge I had developed and improved during my work after finishing school helped me to understand the importance of education and economic power for women particularly when it comes to women's independent voice and decision making.

My personal relationship with empowerment as a term is somewhat strained because of my work experience in government sectors and development organisations. In Arabic empowerment translates as 'Tamkeen' (تَمْكِين) which carries a different meaning. In Yemen, 'tamkeen' as well as the term 'gender' is difficult for both ordinary and conservative people to understand. To them the terms are attached to Western freedom, with all its values, and they question the work of international development organisations, suspicious of political motives. Importantly, moreover, empowerment in its Arabic translation can only be granted by Allah who gives a person the strength to do something difficult. At the same time, these terms are also abused by some local authorities and non-government organisations because they can be used for financial gain and guarantees which can be found under girls' and women's issues. However, the majority of local women's charitable associations believe in girls' right to education and women's economic and social empowerment. It is important to note that activist women who work in this field can be divided into three categories; there are women who come from a good financial, educational and social background and believe in other women's rights to be in a better position; the second category is mixed between men and women who look forward for a positive change for women; the last category

is the one I am part of, the group who work hard to create a space for themselves and hope for the same for everyone. The three categories are all believers in girls' and women's 'tamkeen' at all levels: in education, in social and economic life, and in the political sphere. They all work positively and actively to achieve this level in spite of any social and cultural difficulties and challenges.

Girls behind closed doors

Yemen is one of those countries where people have to work hard to be able to access any services. The state is not economically strong enough to provide more than basic services and they are not available to everyone everywhere in the country. This is one of the reasons that many international humanitarian, educational, health care and development agencies work in the country. It is also noticeable that people have to find their own source of income.

The lack of state support is reflected negatively in people's lives particularly big families. For example, a man living in a city with a big family faces financial challenges as a result of limited income. In contrast, a man with same size family but living in a rural area has even less income and fewer opportunities to access to state services. Furthermore, females within the rural family are more likely to be affected by lack of state services. Moreover, they face another level of cultural challenge which is related to their voice as a girl, a woman or a mother over their own children and their future. In addition, they have no access to an income of their own, including their own land that they inherit. In contrast, a man as head of the family is more likely to hold the power to make decisions. For example, he can decide who goes to school or who stays at home. For many reasons including poverty and cultural barriers, families in rural areas prefer to send their boys to school and keep girls at home. For some girls, access to secondary school is a real achievement as they have to carry out many tasks: obtaining water from wells to carry home, bringing firewood, feeding animals and doing housework. Early marriage is one of the options that parents decide for their girls because it helps to reduce family responsibilities as well as helping with extra income. As a result, girls' education could end at primary school or early secondary school level as generally happened with members of my family and tribe. Higher education is particularly problematic as there are only nine government universities to cover the 22 governorates of Yemen. This means that many governorates have no university. Families who live in rural areas find it financially

challenging to send their boys to big cities to study. Sending girls to university is even more difficult, as many families do not allow their daughters to go to university unless they have the chance to live with relatives. That is because the majority of Yemeni families are conservative and do not accept the idea of allowing their daughters to stay at university accommodation if it is available.

My relationship with Tamkeen (تَمْكِين)

My relationship with Tamkeen started from the stories of my grandmother and my mother then from my personal struggles when I moved from a mixed class school to a girls-only school at my secondary level. My mother like her mother was a strong woman. A woman who finds herself in a new country with 10 children. Her mother was her key supporter but when she passed away, she changed from a woman who lived in a modern society, protected by her mother, to a person who had to play a multiple role to be able raise her kids in a conservative society. Things she kept as part of her own personal identity were her love of classic songs and music, her elegant classic and swing dresses from the 1950s and 1960s, and drawing. She was good at sewing and using her tricot stitch sewing machine, skills her mother had passed on to her and which she passed on to my elder sisters. These skills were one of the additional sources of income she used. She enrolled all of us in school especially the youngest; education enabled four of my brothers to move away and start working as translators with western companies as they could speak more than two languages. My big sister like my mother knew nothing about Yemen but life pushed her harder than my mother by sending her to my father's village rather than a city. This was when my father decided to marry her to his relative, a young man, and moved her to live in his village. She was a little girl but early and forced marriage was, and still is, common behaviour in Yemen.

My mother kept all of us with her even when two of my brothers got married, they were living with us with their wives. They were lucky but I wasn't. My heart is still sad and I feel my back is broken (Kasser dheer كسر ظهر), and sometimes I feel angry towards God and my father about what happened to her and the way her life journey ended. On the other hand, I appreciate her strength and power that she adopted to survive. I feel and see the reflection of my mother's strength and her mother in me. When my mother passed away, I kept her dresses and drawings with me for many years but sadly I lost them when I moved to live with my brother and his family during my time

at university. I used to have a feeling that the main source of my strength was coming from the smell and touch of her clothes and the brown craft drawing papers, but it was more than that. My big sister looks like my mother; when I see her, I feel I am with my mother. She always says she is proud of me and my achievements. She loves education and respects educated women, but she couldn't practise this feeling within her family. She has five boys and two daughters; only the boys finished their studies. My other sisters left school in their secondary level and got married too. For my big sister, one day, her husband said to her 'prepare your daughter, her wedding is next week to my relative'. Her daughter was about 12 years old and my sister couldn't say or do anything to stop her husband's deal. Actually, none of my female cousins of my age finished high school because, if they had, it would have meant they lost their chance to get married early.

My big sister has always stood against anyone who says anything negative about me especially when I was criticised for being single, driving a car and working. She used to say to me, 'you look like our grandmother; I trust you and don't listen to them'.

Winter 2013 was my last visit to Yemen and my sister again reminded me of my achievements, saying 'I trust you and keep in your mind that your educational initiative, work and self-reliance is a good example for all the other young girls in our tribe'. I didn't stay for long in Yemen, it was a short visit for my data collection. My big sister came from our village and stayed with me until I travelled back to England. She came with me to the airport and on the road, she said, 'This is the first time I go to an airport. The last time was when we arrived from Ethiopia'.

For me, this is why I took this direction to study and work and adopt my own version of Tamkeen, to be different and have an independent voice and income. Witnessing what I witnessed from when I was a young girl until I heard my big sister's words on my way to the airport proved to me that I was right and safe.

Tamkeen and my coffee morning

My mother had a special mood every morning; drinking her Ethiopian strong coffee, smoking her special cigarette and listening to the radio to follow-up local news particularly topics around arts and politics. In my daily life I adopted my mother's character in many aspects of my life, particularly the coffee mood.

In my work, the first thing I used to do when I arrived in the early morning at my office was to have my special Yemeni coffee and read the local newspaper. I used to work full time, two shifts, which meant I had limited access to local events. So, my main source of information before I started my day was through the local newspaper and the thing which used to draw my attention was the local news about educational events. One day while I was reading my newspaper as usual, I read about a public event organised by women activists and the talk was about women and empowerment. I knew about this topic but through my own personal experience with my grandmother, my mother and myself. I was curious to go, to listen and learn about it and see what was different. The main speaker was a woman with a higher educational and work profile. She and her friends were involved in many women's projects and activities, particularly projects related to economic empowerment. I went to the event and purposely asked many questions in order to understand more about the topic and during the coffee break I introduced myself and offered my free time and expertise to them as they used to work with many women's charitable associations.

A short period of time after joining them I become one of the trainers and a committee member, then a trustee. There were many active young women with a good level of education who came from different areas in Yemen. In this work, my belief in girls' and women's rights strengthened and took a specific shape that proved to me I was right to have taken my education seriously from school to university. I started to understand more about international policies and legislation, about women's rights and networking with other women's NGOs in the country. Part of my role was delivering training and making site visits to other women's projects in other cities and rural areas. Some projects were funded by the government and some by international organisations or foreign embassies. Through the field trips I became more aware of women's roles within their own small communities.

Most marginalised groups in those areas are women, particularly girls who face cultural challenges and social pressures that relate to the age of marriage and limited availability of girls-only schools together with a lack of qualified female teachers. Generally speaking, the majority of girls and women there are carrying heavy loads on their shoulders, loads that are related to their responsibilities and society's expectations.

Their responsibilities, for example, include looking after their family and their husband's family, working on farms or unpaid family activities. Plus, large numbers of women have limited or no rights to access their husband's or father's properties such as farms and land; this results in a lack of protection in the event of divorce, separation and death of their husband or parents. Preventing women from accessing their rights is an acceptable behaviour in those areas. It happened to me and my sisters when we faced a huge amount of challenges when we tried to sell parts of our share in order to support ourselves, but this was allowed for our brothers.

Self-motivation and Tamkeen

For some women the change starts from within, even though it is not easy if there are barriers and rejection from the wider society. In some areas of Yemen, women are able to challenge the surrounding culture, as was the case in the Southwest Governorates that I visited in Hodeida, Lahj and Hajjah as part of my voluntary work. During one of my field visits I met strong women with independent identities. The meetings usually took place in their houses or at female-only premises. In this area, there were many stories about talented girls and highly skilled women, stories of women entrepreneurs who transferred their own and their family's lives to better positions with limited financial resources. There were stories of others who managed to create small enterprises to be their gateway to combating poverty and unemployment. Rural women work in many areas such as participating in agricultural work, from land tillage, planting and watering to harvesting to the manufacture of household necessities, such as skirts, baskets, hand fans, traditional carpets, pillows and tablecloths. They play vital roles in livestock, milk production and cheese that is sold in nearby markets. They carry out construction tasks and make bricks and pottery. They do their work in a traditional way that they have inherited from previous generations or learned from copying their partners. Sometimes they have no control over the income even though they contribute equally or more than equally to its generation.

Tamkeen in rural areas

My motivation to study, work and challenge my culture comes from my personal experience. Similar scenarios happened to many other females. During one of my field visits I met a young woman who worked in her family construction business. Her

workplace was a small space in her backyard where she used her bare hands to make clay bricks and pottery. It was the first time I had seen a woman working in this field. She realised that I and my colleagues had mixed feelings, being proud of her and surprised too. She explained that in her neighbourhood, poverty and unemployment were very high and therefore the majority of men migrated to large cities or outside the country for the purpose of improving the lives of their families. Some of the men spent years away from their families until they became financially able to send money, some did not come back and created another family elsewhere, while others found it difficult as they were not educated enough to meet market needs and so they came back with nothing. During this time the women looked after the family.

In Yemen we used to have two great queens, the Queen of Sheba and Queen Arwa. In my work with women, I met a new queen. This queen was well known as 'Queen of Oranges'. She was one of the talented hard-working rural women, an urban legend and self-made entrepreneur who became one of the top wholesale fruit brokers in the country. She was an illiterate woman in her late 60s, a mother of seven, who claimed that she was supported by her husband while her parents and brothers rejected her involvement in men's public space. She once said her mother used to say, "I am shaming the family, and now I am supporting most of my family members who once criticised me". Her story, like many other stories, was an inspirational ideal to other women. She was a good example of the quality and personality of Yemeni women, particularly rural women.

The role of educational and development organisations, whether they are national or international, is to support women like those I have talked about to improve their income through a series of programmes. The emphasis is on capacity building programmes including literacy and numeracy, time management, accounting, marketing and negotiation skills. These skills can play a significant role in supporting them to produce and market more products of good quality in a shorter time. In addition, these educational programmes can support them to be aware of how to look after their health and offer them extra time to invest in learning something new whether it is skills or general knowledge. During the field visits we organised or the times we invited women to our head office in the capital, we learned from each other by sharing our experiences.

Income-generating activities and micro-credit programmes are essential for disadvantaged communities and in poor areas, as alongside other educational activities, they give women a chance to improve their income and social life. For the women we targeted and worked with, as well as for ourselves, education led to economic empowerment and to social empowerment. Economic empowerment also opens up extra opportunities for women and other community groups to access varied sectors, locally and regionally. However, educational and economic empowerment are not easy processes to follow. They start from self-motivation, family and community support, belief in and understanding of women's ability to contribute positively to society like men. Finally, external support from the state and international specialist agencies is important for people, particularly girls and women.

“You are one of them!”

Sometimes educated and privileged women have surprised me. Once I was called to a job interview with a highly influential and educated woman, in a senior position in an important charitable organisation, who was confused by my use of the term 'gender'. We were both wearing the hijab but she was also wearing the niqab, signalling that she was more conformist or religious than me. We came to talk about one particular training that I had received in Beirut and its impact on me as a Yemeni woman. My training was a residential Train the Trainer programme with a particular focus on gender and development. I was very careful when using the term gender in any official setting during my paid work because not many people in Yemen were aware of its true meaning in relation to equal opportunities, freedom and human rights. The term 'gender' is widely understood to be in opposition to Islam and Shari'a law. During this job interview I was judged for using the term 'gender'. My interviewer reacted as if I had said something unacceptable and against cultural values. To make sure if I meant what she heard, she asked straight out, “Are you really aware of what you have just said?” and added, “Are you one of them?” stressing the word 'them' with a tone of disapproval. I didn't really know what I was supposed to say when she referred to me as “one of them”. I later attended a regional conference in Egypt that called for women's rights. There I met a Yemeni women's rights activist who was well known for her long-running campaign for Yemeni women's rights in general and her opposition to the inhuman conditions of women prisoners, as well as child marriage. I will call her Fatima.

My job interviewer had clarified what she meant by 'one of them' by adding "I mean like Fatima and her companions". She was referring to this well known activist.

That job interview taught me another lesson in life. Highly educated and privileged women do not always support other women who are trying to reach a higher level in life or who are seen to be challenging the culture. I have had other experiences like this in my working life but always when it comes from a woman I am shocked and surprised. If we do not support each other, how can we hope to progress? After the job interview I was so uncomfortable, despite having been recommended by people who were very highly placed, that I found myself refusing to work for the organisation. My decision was a tough one because I was looking for a job at that time and refusing this offer meant refusing people with a lot of power over who was employed in the area. You can imagine what happened. I had to look farther afield.

Did School and Home Libraries make me different?

As a young girl and orphan, nothing was easy for me including the way I received education from school and at home. I was a very quiet student and most of the time I sat at the end of the class or at the front just to be away from other pupils' eyes. At the same time, I was a good student and I never missed my class or my homework, but my main problem was my lack of confidence particularly to speak and make friends, my voice was quiet too. I am not sure if I enjoyed being at school but I am sure it was my one way of escaping home. At the same time, school was not a comfortable space as I never had a proper school outfit or enough money to pay for my breakfast or buy what I wanted from the canteen like other girls. In the beginning I was in a mixed class school then at secondary level I moved to a girls-only school. My first year at girls' school was difficult as it was a new situation and I didn't understand why I was in a girls-only school which resulted in my feeling not welcomed and not confident enough to speak with other girls. During my studying, I moved three times to three different school in different areas as I moved between my brothers' houses. School education was all right for me, but I didn't get all my knowledge from school, teachers and textbooks. Instead, reading at home was my other source of education. Where I grew up and lived with my brothers, books, newspapers and magazines were available all the time, with different kinds of books depending on my brothers' careers. That is how I received most of my information and explored outside world. My sisters-in-law were illiterate, so used to use old newspapers and magazines

as dining table covers which meant I could read them there too. At school age, I read many western novels and philosophical books that were available in our school library as well as in my brothers' home libraries. As a quiet girl who had no right to complain or share her opinion, I spent most of my time with books and writing diaries, recording what I experienced during the day at school and at home. I used to have my little dreams that I built throughout my reading. I used to do that because that was my safe haven and the space that allowed me to explore knowledge and build my thinking about life. Reading and writing were my gateway to share my opinion and views loudly with paper and ink about the things that I could not share openly without judgment or physical punishment. I used to practise that by myself and it has remained part of me until today. I don't remember sharing my writing with anyone. It was my little secret - my diary and my dreams. The books and quiet behaviour impacted on my way of digesting the complicated reality and fighting for my different future. In fact, for me, life was, and still is, difficult to understand and living between the pages of books is much easier than facing reality and trying to understand people's irrational behaviour. Textbooks as well as teachers were my first steps to build my strong relationship with books at home. At home, no one helped me with my homework or cared about my education in general, but I did. My education was not a priority for my brothers and their wives as they were busy with their children, but it became my own priority. Thus, not passing my final year exam meant I would have to stay another year in my brother's house in my childhood city, while passing meant I could move to the capital and start university. Sadly, I had a car accident which resulted in broken bones and time spent in hospital, after which I was discharged with health problems and bodily weakness. I had good care and attention from my mother's friend, cousin and school headmistress which allowed me to go to the final exam while half of my body (from waist to neck) was still wrapped in a medical cast. I passed my exam with a very good result which allowed me to move and enrol at university. That incident encouraged me to pay more attention to finding resources that could help me to build my knowledge and to prepare me to higher education. I took a decision not to follow my sisters and leave school and wait for a husband. I remember when I used to tell my friends, I have read most of Charles Dickens, Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, Agatha Christie and Plato and Aristotle when I was still at school, they thought I was exaggerating. Furthermore, national and international politics, economy and history were the foundation of my knowledge as most of the magazines and newspapers at

home were focused on those topics. I believe that the relationship I built with reading has allowed me to treat it as my entertainment space and over time, particularly at university, it helped me to understand most of the course work and modules easily. I remember my first result at university was 98% and my name was at the top of my class list. I was happy and proud of my achievement even though I was working full time. However, the result has proved to me that reading at early age has paid off. Reading has helped me in my career. It helped me to understand and fight for my rights and encouraged me to stand with girls and women's rights in one way or another. It has helped me to be me.

Chapter 7 Data Analysis: Policies and Processes

7.1 Introduction

This is the first of three chapters which present the findings of the qualitative data analysis: policies and processes, participant interviews and autoethnographic data. Beneficiary women's capabilities were not examined in a separate chapter because the research focused on policy and process design and implementation in which the women were not involved. It would have been inappropriate to make assumptions about what doings and beings they would value without spending time with them and interviewing them. The present chapter focuses on examining the purposes, policies and processes of IFAD because "The options that a person has depend greatly on relations with others and on what the state and other institutions do" (Drèze and Sen 2002, p. 6). Particular attention is given to mention of women and the education and training opportunities available to them. The chapter begins with an explanation of the analysis process, followed by presentations of the findings from the most relevant published policy and evaluation documents issued by IFAD. The chapter concludes with the findings.

7.2 Data analysis process

The conceptual framework sections relevant to this chapter are highlighted in Figure 7.1. My analysis of policies and processes adopts the proposal of Goerne (2010) who posits that the capability approach may be used in the evaluation of social policy through examining outputs in terms of the extent to which they take into account diversity and promote and enable a choice between various functionings. Moreover, outcomes may be considered in terms of whether they describe capabilities and functionings and provide information about the associated range and quality of what individual beneficiaries can achieve. Goerne further proposes that processes such as planning and implementation which contribute to the effectiveness of policies can be considered in terms of whether longer term outcomes result from (typically numerical) outputs and whether the policies succeed in promoting access to functionings.

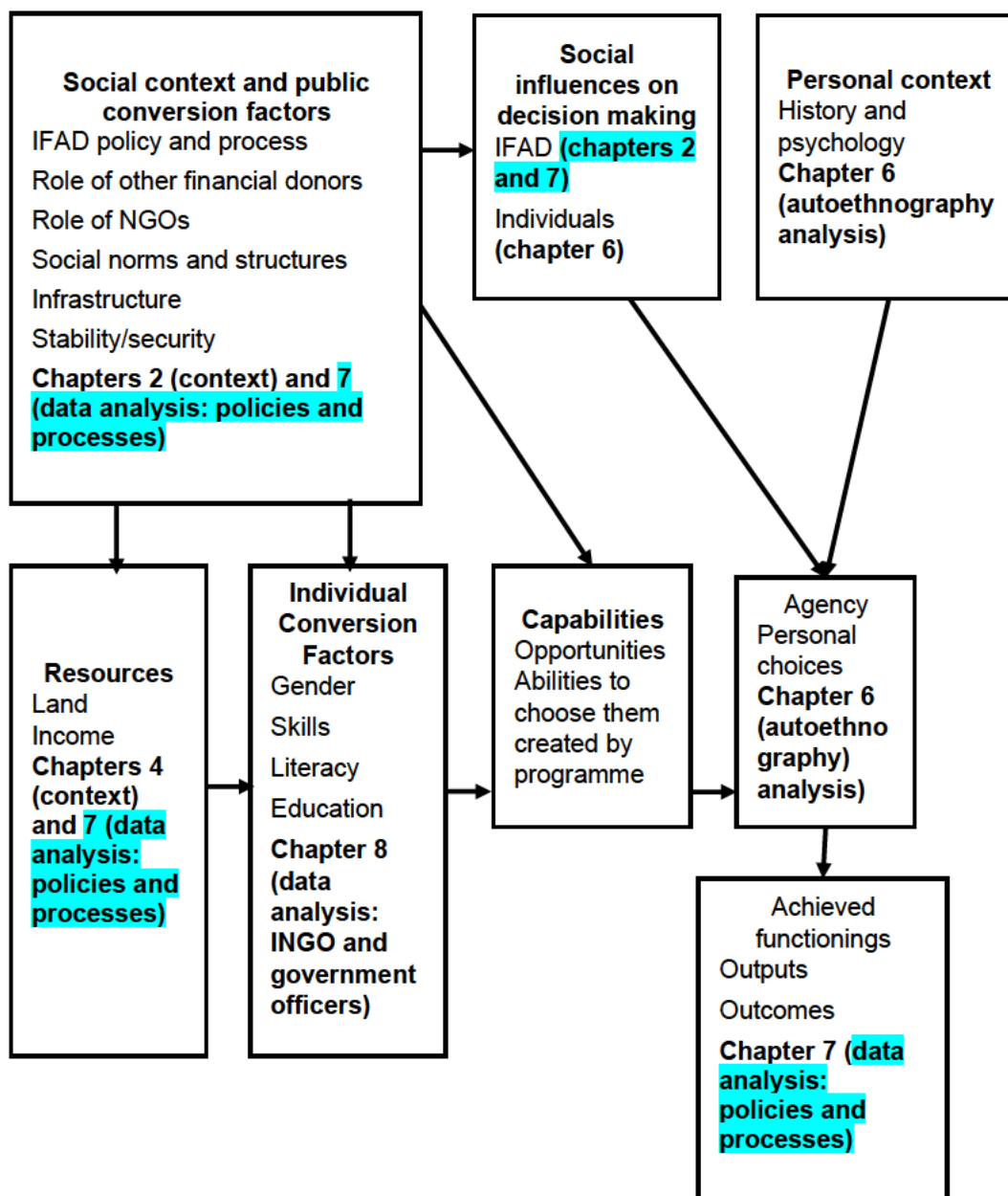


Figure 7-1 Capability approach categories highlighted in IFAD policies and processes

Source: Adapted from Robeyns (2005, p. 98, Figure 1)

My analysis builds on Goerne’s approach by emphasizing the importance of process as highlighted by Sen, who asserts that “informed and unregimented formation of our values requires openness of communication and arguments” (Sen 2002, p. 152). Individual agency, a person’s “ability to act on behalf of what matters” (Alkire 2007, p. 163) is constrained or enhanced by the processes employed by political, religious and economic institutions, grassroots movements and others. Thus the processes

adopted by IFAD and the way they are implemented by individual managers and officers can hinder or help women beneficiaries to achieve greater agency.

The analysis takes into consideration resources and the social conversion factors, which include social and cultural norms, gender relations and public policies, while environmental conversion factors include the constraints or enabling factors of geography, climate and the built environment (Robeyns 2005, p. 99). The influence of social context and public conversion factors is explored. The analysis also examines some of the language used in the documents and questions whether this creates space for misunderstanding and miscommunication among the various parties involved in design and implementation of the policies and programmes. In the context of public services, Bonvin and Orton (2009) have raised the issue of participants or beneficiaries having a voice and being heard in the process of programme design. As noted by Sen:

The subject of fair process and a fair deal goes beyond individuals' overall advantages into other – especially procedural – concerns. And these concerns cannot be adequately addressed through concentrating only on capabilities (Sen 2009, p. 296).

Each document was examined closely, line by line, and in many cases word by word, for evidence of diversity of needs, promotion of access to alternative functionings, and the extent to which individuals could choose between them. The documents were then examined again in the same way but looking for the quality and variety of (valued) functionings that were offered and could be attained. A third examination of the documents, again line by line and word by word, sought to identify whether outputs did lead to outcomes and the extent to which the diverse needs of individual women were taken into account in terms of the particular functionings they could attain through the Dhamar project.

The main IFAD documents I used were the Country Strategic Opportunities Programmes for Yemen (COSOP), Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Project (DPRDP), IFAD Supervision Report and Gender Equality and Women empowerment (GEWE) policy. Other documents such as the IFAD Strategic Framework 2011-2015 and the IFAD Partnership Strategy (2012) were consulted to corroborate or amend the analysis.

Findings are reported first, following Goerner (2010) by outputs, outcomes and processes in order to investigate whether they promote choice, functionings and

agency and what real choices are available to women and whether they are described in capability terms. They are then summarised under the appropriate headings in Figure 7.1.

7.3 Outputs

7.3.1 Documents as outputs

Two kinds of outputs are examined: the outputs specified in the IFAD documents and the documents themselves. Documents as outputs are in general the face that an organisation wishes to present to the world, so they provide one layer of a multi-layered reality. The first important output of any IFAD programme is its country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP), a framework based on co-operation with the government and identification of strategic partners including potential donors. The 2007 COSOP for Yemen does not take great account of diversity among individuals, nor does it greatly promote and enable choice between functionings, partly due to constraints and partly due to choice of working methods.

Although IFAD claims “To ensure strong country ownership, the COSOP design and implementation process is characterized by wide stakeholder consultation” (<https://www.ifad.org/en/cosop>), the COSOP is produced in line with the country’s own strategy and planning and with strategic partners, mainly financial. Neither beneficiaries nor advocates for them are included among stakeholders. The COSOP states that women are targeted specifically by IFAD due to the poverty and “very serious constraints” they experience (IFAD 2007, p.4) and gender balance is one of the cross-cutting themes of all strategic interventions (IFAD 2007, p.9). However, IFAD designs its COSOP in line with the country's poverty reduction strategy and planning framework to enable it to make strategic choices regarding its opportunities “financing and facilitating management for results” (<https://www.ifad.org/en/cosop>). This means that IFAD is bound to work with the government to achieve the results expected by other financial donors in addition to its own partnership member donors (countries) and the Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Project (DPRDP) was one of a number of projects running under the same COSOP.

Partner organisations are essential to IFAD for co-financing, sharing expertise and implementing projects, to:

cooperate closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the other organizations of the United Nations system, as well

as with international financial institutions, NGOs and governmental and intergovernmental agencies concerned with agricultural development (IFAD 2012b, p. 1).

The COSOP identifies potential strategic partners among multilateral and bilateral donors, taking into account the comparative advantage of each and rating each finance and technical partner strong to very strong. With regard to the DPRDP, a new approach for IFAD in Yemen, the document recorded that lessons learnt regarding building community organisations' capacity in planning and skills development "should be shared" by a German partner, whereas CARE's innovation in participatory approaches is rated as "technical standards average, high staff to results ratio" (IFAD 2007, p. 21). Yet in 2002, CARE was IFAD's most frequent NGO partner (IFAD 2002, p. 13).

This suggests that for IFAD, at the COSOP stage, 'participation' was more about capacity-building as a first step rather than involvement in design, planning and decision-making as discussed by Paul (1987) and Alkire (2002), among others. The overall goal of the project as stated in the independent evaluation included "to improve the living conditions and *development participation* of small farm households and village communities in Dhamar" (my italics) (Independent Office of Evaluation 2014, p. 1), which appears to indicate a distinction between 'participatory development' as suggested by the project title and what was actually achieved. For example, the report could have said 'to improve *through participatory development* the living conditions of small farm households and village communities in Dhamar' (my italics). Lessons learned in the first two years of the DPRDP appear to acknowledge this difference:

Ineffective community participation frequently results from a hasty process of community mobilization, inexperienced project staff and lack of provision of training to the communities in planning and management (IFAD 2007, p. 9).

The 2012 supervision report records that IFAD carried out 168 participatory planning workshops and 547 annual monitoring and evaluation workshops, both involving an unspecified large number of beneficiaries as well as staff from a Community Development Unit and service providers (IFAD 2012c, p. 12). A range of training courses was aimed at developing the capacity of local organisations and groups, confirming the focus on capacity-building but potentially enabling some individual and possibly some collective capabilities. The trainings included agricultural extension meetings to open up new opportunities by exploring ideas such as value chains for honey and coffee. It was noted that although Field Officers had been excellent in

delivering participatory planning, training and outreach, support needed by community organisations after the planned exit date had been underestimated (IFAD 2012c). The initial dismissal of CARE's high ratio of staff to output may have contributed to this.

The emphasis in the COSOP on co-financing partners and efficient expenditure is in agreement with the framework adopted by IFAD in 2004 for measuring and reporting the results and impacts of the projects it finances, the Results and Impact Management System (RIMS) Handbook. The supervision report (IFAD 2012c) noted that "reports are overloaded with indicators and details, particularly regarding outputs while impact and outcome level results lack qualitative information" (p. 14). The report also specified the expected programme outputs in terms of activities and numbers of beneficiaries (revised downwards from the original because of disrupted finance and civil unrest), while the project completion and evaluation reports gave numbers and percentage achievement against targets linked to Millennium Development Goals and standard financial measures. For example, the expected rate of return was 2% lower than forecast but benefits such as capacity building were not included (Independent Office of Evaluation 2014, p. 7). The dilemma faced by IFAD in balancing expenditure, beneficiary needs and efficiency is illustrated by the 2009 supplementary grant given to fill a funding gap of around US\$7.5 million due to co-financing organisations changing their priorities (IFAD 2009a). This change directly impacted community participation and local development, causing delays and limits to project activities and opportunities for beneficiaries.

Thus the first finding from the documentation is a tension between partnership and participation which would at the least have constrained outputs. This is linked with the second finding that there is tension between management by numbers and project delivery.

However, in 2002 IFAD had spelt out the importance of partnership with NGOs to achieving the first stated strategic objective of "Strengthening the capacity of the rural poor and their organizations" (IFAD 2002, p. 9). NGOs have special features that make them attractive to IFAD for collaboration: ability to reach further into poor rural areas than authorities, deep knowledge of the local areas and communities, experience in capacity-building, helping to groups to link with other groups to make them stronger, innovative responses to problem situations and flexibility (IFAD 2002, p. 10). Thus they have advantages in trying to deliver "the institutions and knowledge

necessary [for poor rural communities] to articulate their needs and provide their own solutions” (IFAD 2002, p. 9). As with many institutions, IFAD’s messages appear to vary depending on the audience they are trying to impress.

The country background detailed in the COSOP records the difficulties faced by women in Yemen and how social norms and public conversion factors may have limited IFAD’s scope to make a difference. In Yemen, men do not regard women as stakeholders; they limit their choices and set the boundaries for their activities:

Women are faced with very serious constraints ... they have very limited access to assets and are largely excluded from markets. They show higher illiteracy rates and lower primary school enrolment rates than men. Yemeni women do not fare well in other dimensions of life either: their movements are restricted, particularly with respect to leaving their villages; they have very limited control over fertility and have limited access to decision making both at the household level and in public affairs. They are poor and marginalized and therefore a very specific target group for IFAD (IFAD 2007, p. 4).

Unfortunately, little had changed in two decades. Yemen had accepted recommendations aimed at improving women’s political representation at every level, but their representation in government had decreased. There were no plans to improve participation, although the President renewed the earlier commitment to 30% quota (Peace Track Initiative et al. 2018, pp. 22-23). Ten years previously, it was reported that the contribution of governmental bodies established to address women’s issues had not been “positively received or reflected in the executive reality” (Women National Committee (WNC) 2008, p. 24). The WNC was set up under the Supreme Council of Women Affairs to ensure women’s issues were included in mainstream development plans, but few were included in the first year and there was a lack of finance for implementation. Some women’s directorates existed on paper but had no offices or staff; others existed but were not involved in the development of policy or programmes (Women National Committee 2008, p. 24). The WNC highlighted the need for commitment to “gender-budgeting and development of monitoring and evaluation measures”; simply writing words and numbers in plans would change nothing (p. 32). Evaluating the ILO project *Promoting Decent Work and Gender Equality in Yemen 2006-2008*, Khalidi stated that it had set up “a media platform and watch-dog to monitor the image of working women” (Khalidi 2009, p. 6) and had trained around 20,000 workers, of whom some 39% were women, regarding their rights and responsibilities under Yemen employment law (p. 5). The issue of integration into national policies and programmes was raised, although this was seen

mainly as dependent on future funding to sustain development (p. 6). It is clear that women's political participation has not been promoted or facilitated as a choice.

Against this background, the COSOP stated:

Gender mainstreaming will be pursued within the gender mainstreaming strategy that the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation has developed with the support of other donors and that sets as key objectives the access of women to extension services, land, microfinance and time-saving technologies (IFAD 2007, p. v).

“Success in gender mainstreaming requires strong commitment at the level of project management with significant training of staff and service providers” (IFAD 2007, p.8). IFAD reported some successes; “30% of HQ staff and 50% of CDU [Community Development Unit] staff have been women” as well as “10% of participants in a field day, which is significant in the Yemeni context of gender bias towards men” (IFAD 2014, p.4). This shows the gap that needs to be closed at beneficiary level, but also a gap at Head Office level which could reflect who government and partner donors prefer to communicate with. Moreover, it should be noted that ‘gender mainstreaming’ carries no meaning when translated into Arabic and so the English words are used by Arabic speakers, but unfortunately they still carry no meaning.

The COSOP acknowledges the difficulties of tackling gender issues and the importance of “deploying female staff” to reach and train women (IFAD 2007, p. 8).

Actions needed for rural women as a priority group were identified as:

Empowerment of women in social and community affairs • Increase girls' attendance at school, in other educational mechanisms by reducing domestic workload for women • Provide literacy training for women • Provide skill and income generation training to women • Improve domestic water supply • Improve women's access to financial and business services (IFAD 2007, p. 18).

Yemeni women were unlikely to be able to empower themselves in the prevailing male-dominated environment described in the COSOP unless sufficient time was allocated to working with men. The final programme design document (IFAD 2011c) presented a compromise, identifying the need to merge gender mainstreaming with allocating specific funds for target groups of women and youth (p. 23). It recognised the importance of “sensitising” communities about women's right to decent employment and the need for field mobilisation staff to be appropriately trained (p. 25). Teams of two, one man and one woman, from Field Mobilisation staff and Economic Opportunities Fund staff, should work together (p. 25). Although the document emphasized the importance of the early stage of making the community

responsive to women's rights and needs, there was no mention of a need to work with men in general, male village leaders or with religious leaders. This almost certainly points to IFAD wanting to avoid any direct challenge to the government and unwanted involvement in country politics. Supporting evidence for this statement comes from the project completion report validation which highlighted:

...14 month delay in project start up owing to disagreements between the government and the evaluation committee on appointment of a highly qualified woman as the project director, due to traditional gender bias towards men, even though she was selected as the most competent by the evaluation committee (Independent Office of Evaluation 2014, p. 3).

Unsurprisingly, the third finding from the documentation is the tension between sensitising the community to women's rights and avoidance of direct conflict with the government or religious leaders on gender-related issues.

Issues of security and financial management which presented barriers to achieving programme goals are also highlighted in the project completion report (Independent Office of Evaluation 2014, pp. 7-8). Civil unrest made it impossible to reach some of the target areas and there were safety concerns for staff, leading to targets being reviewed and rationalised. Financial management was criticised for a lack of a central written manual, shortcomings in accounting procedures and failure by finance staff to understand the need to keep full records. Findings four and five, of countrywide economic and social insecurity, and financial stability within the government and the project, do not directly affect diversity and choice of functionings. However, they indicate that IFAD found it difficult to achieve the public conversion factors within the programme that would facilitate women empowerment. The findings thus far also indicate that the social context works against meeting aspirations of gender mainstreaming.

The next stage of the analysis looked at the programme outputs to try to assess how far they took diversity into account and enabled choice between various functionings.

7.3.2 Programme outputs

The 2012 supervision report contained detail of types and numbers of outputs within the overall development objective of encouraging sustainable economic growth for men and women alike in rural communities. One set of outputs concerned the setting up of a variety of community groups and organisations: 11 Coordination Committees (CCs), 155 Community Development Committees (CDCs), and 171 Beneficiary

Committees (BCs) (IFAD 2012c, p. 10). The importance of building these groups lies in giving communities the institutions within which they can voice their needs and find their own solutions (IFAD 2012c, p. 9) and hopefully provide a foundation for sustainability. However, it took longer for some of the groups to prepare forward plans and therefore support was needed from IFAD for longer than planned. Whilst it was recommended that CDCs should receive more planned and structured support for project exit and earlier transfer of more responsibility, IFAD may have underestimated the time and effort required to create the necessary institutional conditions at grassroots level, given that the social norms would not have helped.

The last remark is linked to the extent of women's involvement in the groups, which, in the context of social norms and heavy workloads, was very positive. Women comprised 24% of total membership of the village units, 38% of the development committees and 8% of the coordination committees (IFAD 2012c, p.14). This shows that, for whatever reason, such as travel restrictions or patriarchal power, fewer women were involved at the level of pulling all the plans together. The "social organizations" (IFAD 2012c, p. 13) were considered to be the local decision makers which determined the project activities they needed. Along with support for production of development plans, and on-the-job as well as more formal training, they offered the women involved various possibilities for further extension of their capabilities in terms of opportunities and training in managing the organisations as well as planning.

Another extension of capabilities was afforded by the setting up of more than 240 Saving and Credit Groups which in total had more than 6,700 women as members who were offered training targeted on "improving their ability to developing [sic] income generating activities" (IFAD 2012c, p. 13).

A third set of opportunities provided by the project resulted from training 270 women as village extension leaders/agents (compared with 545 men), of whom 70 started their own business and were recognised for outstanding performance, for example by giving them a start-up kit of relevant tools or a course (IFAD 2012c, p. 11). Some of them set up a second business, indicating that those individuals, after realising their potential to run their own small business, created their own opportunities based on existing or newly acquired skills. It is not known how many women benefited from a similar choice among multiple functionings but for some at least the outputs did enable such choice.

Thus, vocational training and informal education did create both opportunities and the abilities to choose between them, although numbers of outputs indicate that not all women in all villages will have wanted (or perhaps had time or permission) to act on them. The project reached only 35% of its target for training men as Village Animal Health Extension Workers (VAHEW) and 65% overall, leading project evaluators to conclude that “since animal rearing is mostly done by women, the more effective use of resources would have been to focus on training more women as VAHEWs rather than men” (Independent Office of Evaluation 2014, p. 6). The conclusion appears hasty; if the activities were demand-driven by the communities, they opted not to involve more women in this activity, or perhaps because the role was also described as a “village extension leader” the social norms regarding men as leaders prevailed. Either way, the evaluators appear not to have invited women’s opinion on this particular point, missing an opportunity for them to use their new-found voices, a small but interesting example of where capability was not extended.

Literacy education and life skills training were aimed at both men and women but predominantly aimed at, and taken up by, women. Importantly, life skills included women’s legal rights as well as healthcare, nutrition and environmental matters. Where possible, women from each community were trained to train other women, thus acting as second-generation role models after the initial intervention by IFAD and NGO staff.

Literacy education can promote confidence and a sense of achievement (Lewis 2012, p. 526) as well as self-respect and potentially enabling a choice between various other functionings. For women who lacked the confidence or ability to read fully vowelized Arabic script, which is found in children’s books up to about Grade 6, basic adult literacy would enable them to sound out words and write fully vowelised words; they could use this to help their children and to pronounce extracts correctly when reading from the Qur’an. Although women with a higher starting level of literacy could potentially progress further, it is probable that the majority of women graduates of the literacy and life skills options were at the basic level. This is based on the stated improvement in the percentage of women able to read and write, from 12% in 2006 to 35% in 2012 (IFAD 2012c, p. 5) together with the level of girls’ attendance and dropout rates. More than 16,000 women completed the literacy education and life-skills trainings compared with fewer than 200 men. Some did go on to become literacy

teachers, manage saving and credit groups or chair community organisation (IFAD 2012c, p.10). However, most women will not have access to reading material other than the Qur'an and their children's textbooks, if their children attend school. The resources needed for them to use their literacy to gain information is therefore very limited indeed outside of the vocational training offered by IFAD or another organisation, resulting in adapted rather than adaptive preferences. Interestingly, messages were used to communicate on topics such as technology transfer, irrigation and saving and credit services, so some use may have been made of newly-acquired literacy skills; radio broadcasts were also used (IFAD 2012c, p. 11). Moreover, there was no mention or recommendation of solar power in the 2014 report and only one, for solar pumps for water supply, in the 2012 report. This meant that when women, alone or with their children, had more time to read after dark, they had to use expensive kerosene as fuel for lamps, hindered by the absence of both a public conversion factor (electricity) and a resource (income); this could have been discouraging.

Additional outputs which may have enabled a choice of functionings included construction of roads and clean safe drinking water provided (both potentially saving time) and the construction of 47 schools to address low enrolment rates. Although the work on schools was not perfect (for example, one was built with too few classrooms and no surrounding walls), enrolment of boys increased by more than 2,500 to 88% while enrolment of girls increased by over 1,500 to 58%, indicating the gap persists (IFAD 2012c, p. 10 and p. 20).

Overall, the outputs recognise the different needs of men and women and indicate that the combination of information about rights and development of literacy can create confidence to take further steps towards choosing and acting on functionings. The functionings offered by the project programme were focused on reducing poverty in the local communities, so were relatively limited, but at the same time they offered choices, and support to take up those choices, that had not been available before. The number of women attending literacy classes also shows the value they attached to the provision.

7.3.3 Programme outcomes

Beneficiaries are reported as saying that DPRDP was the only project that had ever reached them and that it enabled their voices to be heard, thereby assisting the

inclusion, empowerment and participation of women (IFAD 2012c, p. 20). This does describe a capability, the capability for voice, which Bonvin (2018) considers to be essential to the kind of democratic discussions advocated by Sen and is therefore an important capability that can give access to others.

The more formally monitored outcomes cover improvements in: access to finance, agricultural production/productivity, drinking water supplies, food security, household assets, household income, and school enrolment. They also include reductions in: percentage of households experiencing hunger, travel times and costs between villages and district centres, travel times for collecting water. The outcomes are linked above all to the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; all three strategic objectives contribute to this. The first objective, 'empower rural communities', links with the cross-cutting issue of gender balance and Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation objective of women accessing "extension services, land, microfinance and time-saving technologies" (IFAD 2007, p. v). These describe public conversion factors and resources rather than capabilities and functionings. The range of capabilities and functionings is contained under outputs rather than outcomes but is also dependent on the processes of project implementation.

7.3.4 Processes

Consideration of the planning and implementation processes, as far as they are defined in the documents, indicates that the numerical targets may indeed lead to longer term outcomes and promote access to functionings for individual women who are able and willing to take advantage of them. However, in terms of access to functionings through literacy classes, it has already been shown that it is too limited to make a longer-term difference for many women in respect of their reading and education due to lack of appropriate resources. This is related to the fragility of national and local administrative bodies and the sustainability of the community-based organisations which IFAD worked hard to set up as one of the main elements of the project. This in turn is related to the difficulties and challenges of participatory rural development in a fragile state.

A representation of the key elements of the process as evident from the documentation is provided in Figure 7.2. There was considerable flexibility in the details of implementation (what was implemented, where and when), and also in reviewing the process. Flexibility was essential for a number of reasons which include

but are not limited to: the participatory nature of the process at grassroots level; the particular characteristics of a village and participants; the existing level of organisation and development in any given village; and the extent and effect of civil unrest on specific communities. Moreover, the process is not necessarily linear and some communities may not go through every step. For example, when contracted providers failed to deliver project services, Community Development Unit staff had to prioritise service delivery over their own work in areas such as “community mobilisation and capacity building” (IFAD 2012c, p. 14). Another example was IFAD underestimating of the time and effort required to support communities in producing their own development plans as individual communities developed at different speeds. At any stage of a participatory development process, circumstances could change, requiring reviews and revisiting earlier stages. Moreover, some activities or stages can run in parallel, for example setting up the Saving and Credit groups and training women to manage them and the associated finance.

It is essential to have organisations that provide a space for people’s voices to be heard and where, hopefully, decisions and action can be agreed and taken collectively. Establishing them is about capacity building rather than capabilities; community organisations have a legal status and can produce plans, provide information, own assets on behalf of a wider group, and gain and manage resources in a way that is usually not possible for an individual. However, it may be extremely difficult to create and maintain an atmosphere of democratic discussion and shared leadership in Yemen, in view of its history and fragility. Ideally, the key elements of the participatory process would remain in place along with the community organisations, but IFAD may be only a temporary ally as far as the communities are concerned. The success of the process could actually create further dependency. Future planned programmes suggest that greater participation of beneficiaries will be built in at an earlier stage, but unless community organisations exist and discussions take place before the COSOP is designed, there will always be a risk that some initiatives and activities will not quite match with beneficiaries’ understandings of their needs.

Figure 7.2 shows the key stages in the IFAD participatory rural development process. The stages were taken from the COSOP (IFAD 2007) and the supervision report (IFAD 2012c). It can be seen that the project design was determined without any real

beneficiary participation as there were no organisations to represent them (IFAD 2012c, app 2 p. 2). The participatory planning meetings were held before the community was mobilised and groups created, thus women would have been less involved. The initial community buy-in would have come from fewer people, most likely those who already possessed the capacity for voice (probably almost all men). This explains the investment in creating the organisations. The creation of links between community groups and between groups and the local administration came later and represented an attempt to embed some of the gains made by the project by developing support networks. The success in maintaining support networks beyond the life of the project was uncertain, partly due to the worsening violence and deteriorating financial situation in Yemen, which I have signalled as a question mark regarding sustainability. Sustainability has implications for women's capabilities and their exercise of agency after the programme ends but was only alluded to in terms of the uncertainty of co-ordinated support for the Savings and Credit Groups. Political turmoil made the implementation of the follow-on Rural Development Programme uncertain.

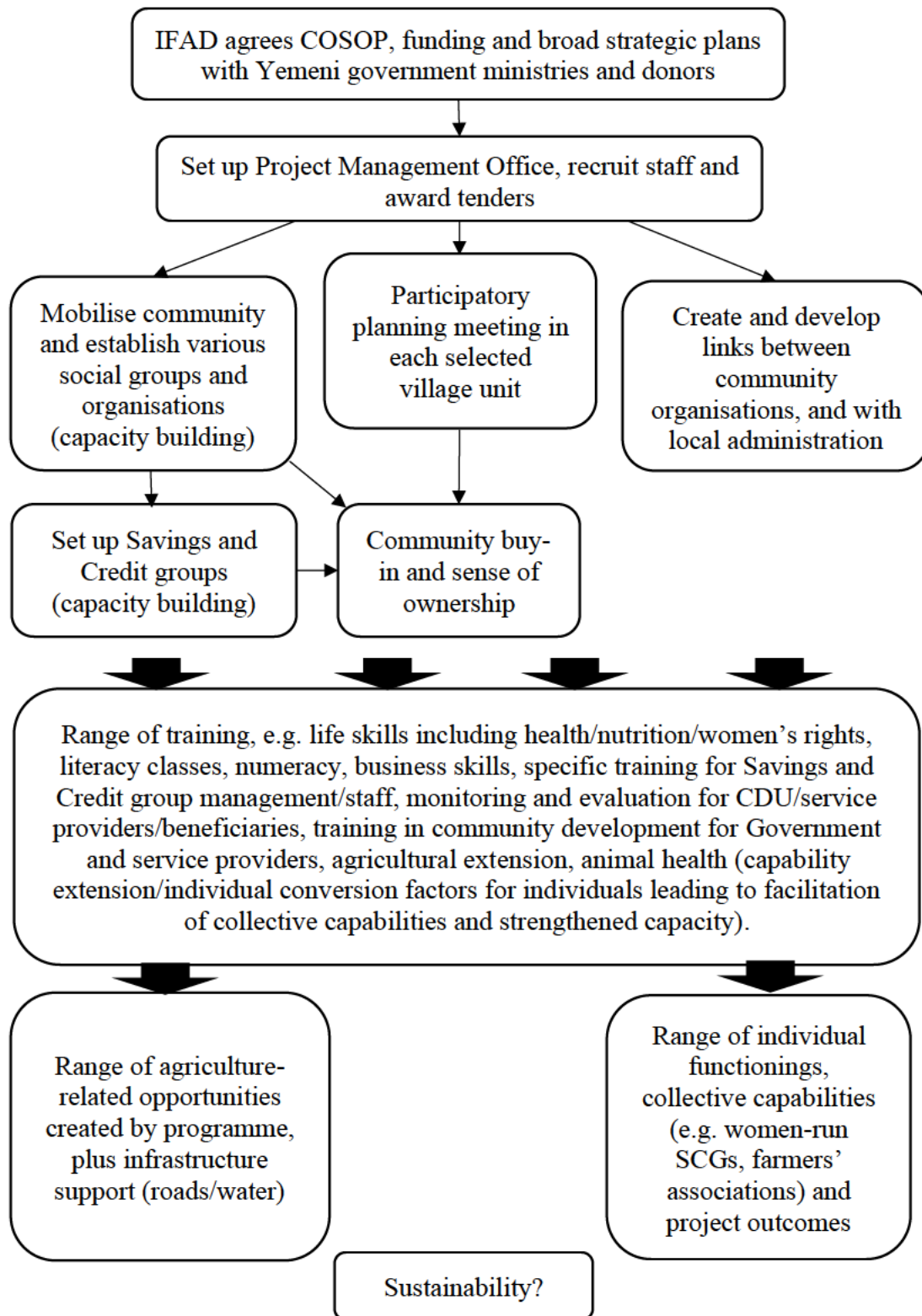


Figure 7-2 Key elements of IFAD participatory rural development process in Dhamar

7.4 Beyond the observable

According to a surface-level documentary analysis, the project does support the development of a number of capabilities and functionings. However, tensions can be

seen to emerge when one looks a little deeper. The tensions between partnership and participation, and between sensitising communities and engagement with political and religious leaders regarding gender issues, have their origins in differing agendas, value sets and power. The recognition that health, nutrition and education are important elements of poverty reduction contrasts with one donor's decision to withdraw funding because their priorities had changed. The donor ignored the fact that individual lives would be negatively affected and, presumably, assumed there was no responsibility on the part of the donor for honouring financial commitments made to a poverty reduction programme if the measures of community development did not contribute directly to headline figures. This suggests that in addition to a 'return on investment' agenda, some element of power without responsibility may be at work, and if one donor can do it, maybe any donor can do it.

The emphasis on numbers from the top down impacts on field staff and beneficiaries who are trained in monitoring and evaluation. This is a condition of almost all funding and indeed donors need to know their money is well spent because of accountability to taxpayers and/or shareholders in the donor country. However, it raises a question about the relative importance of investing in poverty reduction and investing in recording and counting expenditure. IFAD's funders are not examined in this thesis but the effects of the World Bank and major country donors can be felt.

The other major but unobservable reality is the 'gentleman's agreement' among government and religious leaders that determines women's position in Yemeni society, embedding it within the gender structure. This can be deduced from references in IFAD's documents to the restrictions on women's lives, the repeated but unmet government commitment to greater political representation of women, and the difficulties of tackling gender issues, combined with the absence of any mention of the need to work with men who are village or religious leaders, other than 'sensitising' the community to women's right to decent work. Whilst IFAD clearly commits to supporting government, the avoidance of the issue suggests that the effects of interventions may be limited. The difficulties of assuring safety for girls to attend school is 'actual' but the level of illiteracy among women cannot be excused on the basis of safety, or customs such as early marriage. Moreover the safety may refer to moral safety, avoidance of any contact with males, as much as physical safety. Families can avoid their responsibilities set out in the Qur'an for taking care of their

daughters. Men can ignore the fact that the Qur'an is for everyone, male and female, and that it begins with the word 'Iqraa اقرأ' which in Arabic contains the meanings of read, question and understand. IFAD appears to ignore the role of men in creating the culture, possibly because its role would be much reduced if it were to tackle the issue more directly. The government would also want to avoid this because they could lose an important source of income, something which could apply to a number of other donors as well, and this would weaken the government's apparent power in being able to help its people.

However, this also raises the question of whether IFAD is seeking to sustain itself and its role and maybe this is more important than the gender equality and empowerment of women.

7.5 A note on language

IFAD's official published documents use the terms that are accepted and expected by Western countries and donors. In addition to gender mainstreaming, which has already been highlighted, the word 'gender' by itself or used with 'equality' or 'balance' at best lacks meaning in Arabic and at worst suggests a way of thinking about women which is against the role of women that is defined by religion. Empowerment, whether of women or rural communities, can only be granted by Allah and certainly not by IDOs like IFAD, not by women themselves. Empowerment of women in community affairs may be highly contentious if understood, because it not only seeks to empower women but to usurp the perceived right of men to deal with community and political affairs. Moreover, the concept of community mobilisation could cause concern because mobilisation translates in Arabic as having much stronger military connotations than the English word. 'Capacity building' is relatively neutral and potentially less threatening than 'capability development' since building capacity does not necessarily require the capacity (i.e. the skills and knowledge) to be used in the future.

Other non-contentious terms such as 'stakeholder', 'partner' and 'participation' give rise to some confusion because they are open to differing interpretations. This is not helped by the way that they are sometimes used interchangeably which can add to the confusion.

An additional generalisation about the use of language is that even in monitoring and evaluation reports, there is an understandable emphasis on successes but relatively little mention of what was less successful or lessons learned. Naturally, IFAD wants donors to keep on giving and is not alone in presenting achievements in positive terms while minimising self-criticism.

7.6 Conclusion

Consideration of the documents themselves as outputs identified five key findings and issues. The first was a tension between concepts of partnership and participation, with the value of the relationship with NGOs more clearly acknowledged in a document that was not part of the project documentation. Similar and related tension was identified between a management-by-numbers system and an approach to project delivery which talked about the empowerment of women in a highly patriarchal society. IFAD's recognition of the gender imbalance and the need to sensitise communities to women's legal rights was accompanied by avoidance of plans to talk to influential men such as religious leaders, even at grassroots community level. Issues of security seriously impaired project implementation, while shortcomings in financial management caused further problems. In addition, it was noted that terms such as 'gender mainstreaming' carried no meaning when translated into Arabic while others such as 'empowerment' could lead to misunderstanding or alienation. Table 7.1 summarises these issues.

Table 7-1 Key issues from IFAD documentation

KEY ISSUES
Emphasis on partnership rather than participation
Programme affected by co-financing donors
Outputs determined top-down based on country context
Management by numbers
Sensitisation of men in rural communities to rights of women combined with avoidance of engagement with religious leaders
Language of gender equality and empowerment can be meaningless and/or offend when translated into Arabic

Examination of the programme outputs did show that several functionings and some capabilities were promoted by the project. Diversity, in the sense of focusing on women, was a vital part of the programme, and there were several choices of functionings made available by the project, from agricultural extension services to paid and unpaid opportunities in Savings and Credit Groups, becoming a trainer, or setting up a business of a woman's own choosing. Importantly, the programme facilitated development of the capability for voice, a core capability for women's empowerment. However, whilst literacy training made a considerable contribution to this, there was a lack of resources for developing literacy-related capabilities and functionings beyond the very basic for women who were almost wholly illiterate at the start of the project.

The process did not work perfectly, but most of the essential elements were in place. Significantly, beneficiary participation was more or less absent in the project design because at the beginning, the organisations that could give beneficiaries a voice were simply not there; IFAD had to create them.

The presence of the underlying unobservable reality was highlighted in three major areas: donor agendas and power structures, avoidance of gender issues in order to retain power and influence, and self-interest on the part of government and funders in sustaining their own role.

The following chapter examines whether these findings are consistent with participants' views and whether new insights arose from the interviews carried out with them as part of the research for this thesis.

Chapter 8 Thematic Analysis of Interviews

8.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the process I used to analyse data from my participant interviews, after which the findings are presented mainly within themes under the headings related to capability approach as shown in Figure 8.1. These are compared where appropriate with findings from the analysis of IFAD policy and processes in the preceding chapter. Participants were asked specifically the reasons why IFAD and other IDOs intervened in Yemen to determine if perceptions varied among those working at grassroots level, at national or international level, IFAD, NGOs and various ministries. For the same reason, they were asked about the impact of the Arab spring.

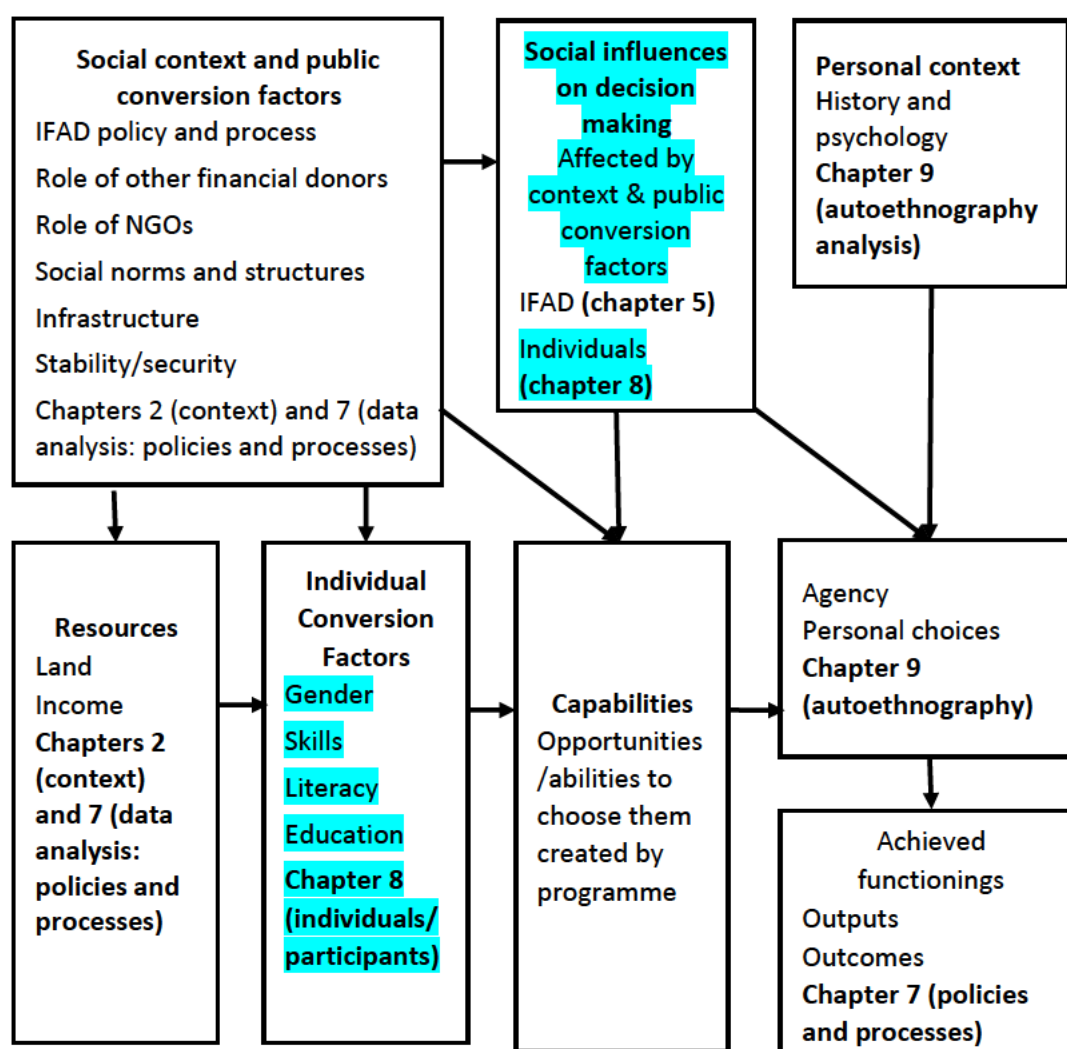


Figure 8-1 Capability approach categories highlighted in participant interviews

8.2 Data analysis process

Wellington (2015, p. 261) suggests there are five stages in the data analysis process: immersion, reflecting, taking apart/analysing data, recombining/synthesizing data, and relating and locating your data. I first needed to prepare and organise my data from the interviews by giving a reference number to each transcript and field note. I started familiarising myself with the data by listening several times to audio recordings of interviews (face-to-face, telephone and Skype) that I had permission and equipment with power supply to record, then transcribing them. I read and re-read notes of interviews for which I did not have full audio recordings and read written responses. I also read my memos and field notes several times. I translated the Arabic transcripts into English and then back translated them to check accuracy. It is important to be clear about how I dealt with translation issues because “concepts in one language may be understood differently in another language” and this applies to collection, analysis and presentation of data (van Nes et al. 2010, p. 313). Some scholars argue that professional translation improves the trustworthiness of the research (Squires 2009), while others have argued that bilingual and bicultural researchers may be better able to capture and convey cultural meanings (Hennick 2008, p.5). Culture in fact varies from one Arabic-speaking country to another; the dialect is often different, the proportion of Sunni and Shi’a Muslims varies, and the participation of women in higher education is sometimes very different. I therefore decided to carry out the translation and back translation myself but had a number of long sessions with a native English speaker to check whether the English conveyed the meanings correctly.

After I had gained a good grasp of the data, I began to identify chunks of meaning and key words and points in individual transcripts as well as connections between them and with points arising from the memos and field notes. In fact I had several attempts at this, using NVivo but then using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets so that I could keep copies of what I had already tried. I also found that it was better to work manually for several reasons. It highlighted different uses of language in Arabic related to the position, gender or particular perspective of the individual, which could have been lost if I had to reword some of the expressions (Gorra and Kornilaki 2010). I was particularly interested in the development process so carried out one analysis by process (based on the verbs used by participants which indicated action) and the

focus of that process or action. Findings, however, were too general to be useful. My aim was to carry out thematic analysis in the six stages proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 16-23): familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally, producing the report. In fact I found there were many iterations and the themes based on participants' key words and phrases did not readily fit with the capability approach. I therefore took advantage of the flexibility of thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) who indicate there are various ways of identifying themes from patterns in the data. These include using the research questions, basing themes on appropriate literature or according to the researcher's own judgment. I chose to link the themes from the transcripts to the conceptual framework based on the capability approach literature and relevant themes from the literature review. Finally I was able to bring the summary findings together under two headings, (i) rural women and capability extension, and (ii) challenges remaining.

In agreement with the use of the critical realist paradigm, the analysis takes account of participants' experiences and understandings as well as how these result from events, the actions of others and the wider social context(s) in which they operated, venturing to look at some of the unobservable but 'real' aspects of reality.

8.3 Social context and public conversion factors findings

The themes and sub-themes identified under this capability approach heading are shown in Table 8.1. These themes and sub-themes were constructed based on a combination of participants' perspectives and themes from the capability approach literature.

Table 8-1 Social context and public conversion factors: themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme
Institutions and interventions	Poverty and development
	Peace and humanitarian assistance
	Human rights
	How IFAD benefits rural women
Safety and security	
Partnership, participation and power	
Influence of social norms	

8.3.1 Institutions and interventions

Institutions play a significant role in an analysis based on capability approach and critical realism because of their considerable power. The importance of IDOs working with the government was stressed, although it was recognised that IDOs were working to their own mandate and that developed countries were looking after their own interests in terms of increasing international trade and suppressing terrorism. The twelve participants who commented on the role of financial donors and IDO interventions saw them in a positive light as supporting the government and working for peace and development. “The majority of international development organizations are United Nations organizations and programmes that work for peace, development, humanitarian assistance and human rights” (Participant (P) 6). There was a spread of responses, reflecting the varying roles of individual participants; two people mentioned peace, five stressed the relief of poverty, six directly mentioned development, two gave answers that could have come straight from an official document, and five specifically mentioned human rights. Two specifically mentioned providing support for women and girls and another two stated they could not deliver their national training services without financial support from IDOs. Selected quotes from these participants are given in sections 8.3.1.1 to 8.3.1.3 under the heading to which they apply. One participant summed up the reasons for interventions simply as “political and economic conditions in general” (P9).

8.3.1.1 Poverty and development

I have grouped poverty and development together because, as the participant perspectives presented below highlight, they represent two sides of the same coin. The extreme poverty leads to interventions aimed at poverty reduction, many of which can be classed as ‘development’, including those aimed at raising education levels.

Poverty in this context encompasses poor natural resources, food insecurity, and a lack of finance in rural areas for anyone wanting to start a micro-enterprise. The situation grew worse after the 1990s war in Iraq, when Yemen lost most of the finance for development that had been provided by wealthy Arab states. Examples of participant quotes which illustrate the level of poverty are:

In fact, the country suffers from many difficulties that have limited its ability to provide good services for citizens... These include limited natural resources, a high birth rate, and high level of population compared to the level of income of the state. (P10)

The same person commented that:

The country imports most of its foods and goods and also borrows from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other donors to cover its expenses and secure development projects for its citizens. (P10)

Another participant highlighted unemployment as well as food insecurity and the need for finance in rural areas:

The [male youth] unemployment rate is so high and it is more than 50% - I think - the poverty in 2011 was around 50% that is the mean, also insecure food [supply], insecure people are also a very high [number] in this country, so the only sector which can support these poor people is the micro finance - they can create their own income generation and prove that it is really supporting them very much. (P1)

This view assumes that there is sufficient income as a resource available in the community to sustain the businesses established by micro-finance.

The extreme poverty was emphasized by one participant who used Dhamar as an example to illustrate the magnitude of the budgetary problem:

Yemen is a drastically poor country. (P5)

In the case of the Dhamar project, the project allocation was 20 million USD when compared with the real demand of this governorate it represented 5% of the whole budget needed, of course there were other donors as well as the government's contribution, but all these fell short of expectation and altogether may have reached 30% of the total support required. (P5)

The link between the weakness of the economy and Yemen's need for development was made explicit:

Yemen's economy is not strong enough to finance its development goals (P10)

When they [IDOs] participate in the development process in these countries - of course - they will support eradication of poverty. (P1)

The purpose of the intervention of development organisations is based on a development perspective with the aim of helping poor countries overcome poverty and improve their economic conditions. (P4)

Most participants identified development as the reduction of poverty, stating that the mandate of IFAD was to support poor people to overcome their poverty through diverse programmes and types of intervention. Specific actions in Dhamar were stated as:

We target the landless people and women and youth also, to support them to create their income generation projects through providing them with finance [...] One of the greatest obstacles for these communities [is] they can't access the bank because banks have complicated processes and so we [are] now supporting new micro finance institutions just now to reach remote areas. (P1)

Another recently-introduced approach in some governates other than Dhamar was the creation of value chains for coffee and honey among the economic-based projects benefiting poor farming communities, connecting small producers' groups together and giving them the knowledge and skills to get better deals from distributors and exporters. Some participants identified the importance of IDO finance for education and training, including the fight against illiteracy.

In general, IDOs were seen to support the government of poor countries:

[IDOs] help the countries financially with projects and programmes, either by grants or loans or direct funding, particularly working with them to sponsor economic progress and to help communities to come out of poverty. (P8)

The case in those countries including development issues in Yemen is about lack of governments' support and some of those governments rely on international aid and loans whether it is humanitarian aid or financial and technical support to the government sectors. (P15)

Some [IDOs] really care about local communities and help them to improve their lives by providing them with good quality development and educational programmes and activities. (P13)

However, governments were also expected to be fully committed to achieving plans and goals:

Each and every country has a development plan for poverty reduction and they have their own strategies and all organisations [IDOs] support these countries' efforts and their development plans, they put in a lot of money and effort and in return also expect equal commitment from the government. (P8)

Regarding IFAD's role, participants had this to say:

Since IFAD's mandate is 'to enable poor to overcome their poverty' and Yemen is considered as one of the poorest countries in the region, it's obviously targeted by IFAD. (P5)

Its [IFAD's] main objectives are in line with the Millennium Development Goals, Yemen's national poverty alleviation strategy and Yemen's rural development strategy, and are in tune with IFAD's strategic framework and priorities and in line with IFAD's resource allocation system based on performance level. (P6)

Yemen is very important for IFAD because of the origin of IFAD itself, that IFAD was created in the 70s with oil price crises which also led to food crises, and because of the increase the countries got together and decided to do something to support security [all] over the world...and decided to come together to work together and so this partnership between Arab and western countries started IFAD and Yemen was one of the poorest countries in the Arab region and still remains very important for IFAD and its governing body. (P7)

IFAD's role was seen as essential and as having become more so as a result of the Iraq war:

The role is vital in terms of supporting the government development goals. (P11)

Before the Iraq war in 1990s, most of the development projects were funded and supported by wealthy Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, and Libya but during and after the Iraq war, we lost most of the support. It is politics, you know. (P10)

The specific importance of micro finance for women to start their own small business was that having money and assets was not only welcomed by their family and acceptable to their community but conferred a certain status, as made clear in the following quote:

Without the economic empowerment for women I think nothing will happen because economic empowerment is the first step for women empowerment and we have seen it. I remember one of the stories when I did an interview that I can share with you... so, when I asked the lady who became a businesswoman to support the project by talking about how she preserved her social status in the community, she said 'You are worth what you have. You are worth what you have'. (P2)

In other governates, IFAD had been assessing value chain development as a cornerstone of its economic opportunity programmes for implementation in governates where production lent itself to a particular value chain:

It is economic based projects so we focus on the rural, poor farmers who can benefit and who work in agriculture [relevant to] these value chains so we target them [...] For example, in fisheries you cannot target land governates, so when the economic opportunities programme targets a value chain like honey, coffee, agriculture, so we focus on the governates where coffee is grown [and so on]. (P1)

Some interventions by other IDOs seemed to be less well accepted in Yemen, when it is felt that not enough consideration is given to the specific country culture when projects are designed. Implementation can be negatively affected:

This also is happening in many cases, especially with projects designed without taking into account [the] community's religious considerations, community's ethics, existing cultural habits and these are a main reason behind some projects' failure. (P5)

National literacy, numeracy and life skills classes were perceived as more important for women who could then raise their children with better health and help with their education. However, implementation and achievement of national literacy goals were dependent on national administrative bodies working with tribal and religious leaders as well as local authorities.

To implement those [literacy and numeracy] programmes, we work in a good partnership level with local authorities in the governorates as well as networking with the tribes and religious leaders. (P16)

Regarding national vocational training, no mention was made of networking with tribes, religious leaders or local authorities. This may be linked to the high rate of youth unemployment mentioned earlier and an acknowledgement of the attractions of joining one of the militias or a terrorist organisation in the absence of other jobs. Some national vocational training was open to both females and males, but the majority of trainees gained employment in factories or garages “where girls are not really welcomed...This is not about policies or government strategies only, but it is about societal attitude and behaviour” (P10).

It was clear for some participants that ‘education’ referred to the traditional classroom-based education system and that the training and capacity-building included in development programmes was something completely different and unrelated. One response was, I think, intended to put me in my place gently but firmly after I asked about education, by reminding me that the picture and players were much bigger than us both:

According to the announced agenda in general, the purpose of the intervention of development organisations is based on a development perspective with the aim of helping poor countries overcome poverty and improve their economic conditions. They work within an international agreement under the auspices of the United Nations. (P4)

Similarly, it was subtly pointed out that whilst policies and practices aimed at including women were central to IFAD’s own core policy on gender equality and women empowerment, they were not necessarily accepted outside of development projects:

The inclusion of women in development work and the emphasis on gender equality in developing policies are accepted from a developmental point of view. (P4)

This particular participant appeared to struggle with answering a series of direct questions about what IFAD did for women’s education, concentrating firmly on capacity-building, agriculture and technical aspects, whilst only adding literacy at the end:

IFAD has a clear role in the targeting and capacity-building of women. In all IFAD programmes implemented in Yemen previously referred to and the project document, there are texts and indicators that reflect this trend. (P4)

In the rain-fed agriculture and livestock project, for example, many educational programmes have been directed at the organisational side to create productive groups, as well as the feasibility study for projects and the accounting aspect, as well as some technical aspects related to their production projects as well as literacy classes. (P4)

8.3.1.2 Peace and humanitarian assistance

Various IDOs have been involved in Yemen over time due to repeated wars, conflicts, famines and epidemics and there are times when peace initiatives, humanitarian aid and development programmes are all present simultaneously in different parts of the country.

They [IDOs] are working in Yemen for peace and development. they also provide humanitarian assistance and support human rights. (P1)

There are some areas in Yemen [that] need humanitarian help and other areas need development interventions. (P1)

The developed countries, which have the strongest voice in policy formulation, management and financing of these organizations, have a common interest in the work of maintaining peace and stability in the world. (P6)

One participant highlighted that in all these situations, women were the most vulnerable to any risks, financial and physical; they were vulnerable because of the culture, a problem which was not confined to Yemen.

If we talk about the UN and international organisations, they know that women in developing countries, they are the category which is – you know – they are the most vulnerable to any risks, conflict or something. (P1)

The vulnerability of women was one of the reasons why IFAD project staff who were Yemeni nationals continued to work after other projects ended in 2011.

IFAD does not directly address issues of peace and humanitarian assistance, However, its rural development policies focus on improving agricultural production for better food security and for future sustainability, in the hope of lessening the need for some of the humanitarian assistance in the future.

Whilst IDO interventions were seen by some participants as a demonstration of developed countries' responsibility to those less developed, they were also seen to be ultimately working for their own interest as well as benefiting developing countries. An increase in economic trade and growth through development would lead to improved peace and stability and to a reduction in terrorism. It was said that otherwise, terrorism could flourish in a context of high levels of poverty and unemployment.

They [developed countries] also have the same common interest with the developing countries to mandate peace and stability, because when you develop these countries this will lead to growth of trade - of course - increase the investment in these countries and capital flows in the development countries and will – of course – support and help [efforts] to drying up the sources of terrorism because when terrorism grows in the poorest countries where there are no job

opportunities, where the rate of unemployment is high...and that is why they are interested in developing countries, including Yemen. (P1)

In the development of these countries, this will lead to a flourishing of international trade, increased investment and capital flows, and will help to dry up the sources of terrorism because terrorism arises and grows as poverty spreads and jobs are absent. (P6)

Developed countries were seen to have the strongest voice in policy formulation, management and financing of IDOs, thus it is understandable that they wish to pursue their own interests by supporting developing countries. It was also noted that not many donors worked in rural areas in Yemen. In the words of one participant:

...maybe they don't like to work in rural areas because it is more expensive to work in rural areas even though the rural population in Yemen is about 25% of the population and it creates pressure on development agencies and development needs. (P2)

It is understandable that some ordinary citizens as well as politicians suspect that there is a hidden agenda of westernisation.

8.3.1.3 Human rights

It is interesting that human rights were emphasized strongly by people working for IFAD, indicating their commitment. One person gave the top three reasons why IDOs intervene in developing countries as to:

- 1 - Promote/enforce human rights practices
- 2 - To contain the negative aspects of globalisation processes or also
- 3 - Uphold state integrity/sovereignty (P8)

Interventions were seen to be able to specifically help women and girls to know and ideally exercise their rights, especially where their involvement was included in funding conditions. It was said that unless women's involvement was a condition of funding, women would not be seen in the implementation of a project. Even with such conditions in place, it was difficult for women to exercise their rights. As one participant commented:

However, it is not easy to change people's attitude towards women's rights. They have equal right to participate in all government sectors and leadership positions. (P11)

This was reflected in some of the lessons learned for future projects that participants mentioned. Two people talked about empowering rural *communities* rather than women [my italics] through community-led development methods, in recognition of the fact that this was less threatening to social norms as well as individual men in

those communities and also that they needed to support change. One participant (P6) described the empowerment of rural communities as a 'strategic pillar'. A second strategic pillar was the creation of links between community organisations and local administrative institutions; this could help to lower any perceptions of threat to the Yemeni authority from the IDO. Moreover, this could help to improve sustainability. In the words of the participants:

One of the main objectives of IFAD's interventions is:

Empowering rural community through supporting them to establish their community organisations, because they work with organisations and not with the individuals. (P1)

The three pillars were explained as follows:

We have also focused on three strategic pillars based on lessons learned from previous experiences: (1) Empowering rural communities through community-led development methods and [(2)] in the context of the new Yemen orientation towards decentralization of decision-making, support for linkages between community institutions at the local authority level (3) financial services support. (P6)

8.3.1.4 How IFAD benefits rural women

I was shown and offered many photographs of activities and beneficiaries, for which I had been given appropriate permissions to use. The photographs were essentially a record of what happened throughout the project and I was given free choice of which to use. The selection in Appendix D highlights aspects that I considered important and informative: typical environments in which activities took place (literacy classes, Savings and Credit Groups, community discussions); differences in dress between rural women, a community development worker (no face covering) and the project co-ordinator (non-traditional dress and no face covering); typical women's small businesses; and the distance maintained by groups of men and women in community meetings. The final photograph reflects the achievement of having men and women working together in one room, which for me is proof that it really happened.

It was perceived that benefits for women were still at an early stage in Yemen because the processes of raising awareness, educating and building women's capacity required a long time for effects to be seen. However, the results from Dhamar were promising and the approach was being adopted for future projects.

Participants acknowledged that IFAD was still learning and making improvements to its processes:

Two years ago we developed a gender strategy, country strategy for Yemen and we worked with the government and with the projects, we wanted it to be participatory and also to learn from the field experience of the project's staff and we came all together and discussed the strategy and came out with a plan for gender mainstreaming and how we can target women and we are still working on this issue. (P2)

At the moment [IFAD is] developing another new project called the rural growth programme...and this is going to build on several earlier projects in Dhamar and [the] participatory rural project, community based, and three projects [that have] just come to an end and became very successful on women's education, and this project will focus on new areas of Yemen. (P7).

Women beneficiaries of the rural participatory project were involved through the community development plans in the planning of the next project. The following quote also highlights the different understandings of 'participation'; here it is used in the sense of 'attend' rather than 'actively take part in'.

Women have benefited from [IFAD] projects, even those who *just* [my italics] participate. After the project and with other donors when our development project comes to the end, these people, these women, are already trained and with experience they will get involved in the planning and management of any new intervention. (P4)

One person reported that there was considerable interest from potential partners who wanted to work with IFAD based on their positive experiences with participatory rural development:

We have noticed there is huge interest from other partners like the Islamic Development Bank and European Union Global Environment and other groups, all of these organisations want to come and work with us to benefit from our experiences in this area. (P7)

The provision of clean, safe drinking water to communities was of vital importance in freeing up some time for women to take part in other activities; estimates of time savings were between two and five hours a day.

They wake up very early, they go to bring water for between two to five hours - the distance between their homes to the water resource - so this is why we provided them with the water, because it saves their time and also makes their life more easier, and gives them an opportunity to participate [in] other activities, and they go to the field to grow, to plant, to harvest, to do everything - just women. (P1)

Following this, the first significant benefit is that women participate actively in meetings and have a voice which is not only heard but listened to, exercising their capability for voice. It remains challenging to reach 50/50 membership of women in

the main committees of associations and organisations, so IFAD supports women to establish their own organisations such as the Savings and Credit Group associations as well as encouraging participation in joint community meetings and organisations. Moreover, informing them about their rights and giving them gender training results in them expressing their thoughts and ideas much more than before. In the words of one participant:

...when you go to the women who we were working with...it is different than when we go to other communities, they are more empowered, they talk very much, and they become more independent and they contribute to the family budgets. (P1)

From a practical point of view, IFAD considers capacity building for women (rather than capability development) as the single most important factor for enabling them to improve their standard of living.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) considers capacity-building for women as the critical and most important factor for small-scale income-generating projects that empower women and improve their standard of living and that of their families. (P6)

Capacity building is the term commonly used to describe giving individuals, organisations or communities the skills and knowledge they need to reach the next level. It is more than simply training because it involves such things as helping individuals to organise themselves into informal or formal groups, to manage those groups and work with other groups.

However, unlike the capability approach, it does not take into consideration the opportunities available for individuals to exercise the skills and knowledge. 'Capability' includes both skills and opportunities. Moreover, capacity building does not necessarily involve consideration of whether individuals achieve doings or beings that they have reason to value. Individuals may not all have reason to value the skills, knowledge or opportunities they are given. For example, if a woman trains as a village extension leader but finds it causes real problems for her relationships with family members, she may cease to value that opportunity.

A degree of economic empowerment was achievable through the Savings and Credit Group associations run by women; this helps them to avoid men taking all their earnings from agriculture.

They do 90% of the agricultural work... when it comes to the cash, then the men come to take [their] cash. (P1)

Opportunities were made available at various levels and in a number of areas related to agriculture, so there was some choice open to beneficiaries. The range included confidence building, life skills, accessing relevant technological and environmental information, training in animal health and agricultural extension, business skills and a small number of paid part-time and full-time jobs. The range is illustrated in the following quotes:

We have provided them with assistance, like some kind of skills building, training in the livestock... and also we provide the community training centres. (P8)

In this context, the Fund focuses on empowering women to have access to the latest technological information in agriculture, production and climate change adaptation procedures, as well as appropriate techniques to access this information. They also have access to creative, professional and marketing skills, leadership skills, self-confidence building, and the ability to negotiate and discuss issues of interest to them with relevant authorities. (P6)

The self-confidence building activities mentioned were one element of a flexible wider life skills programme:

That aimed to help beneficiaries to share their skills to create activities to improve and strengthen their skills (P13).

Examples of specific educational activities were:

Programmes that enhance women's social role and status...[activities that] support women's education in health related to maternal and child health in remote rural areas. (P9)

The same person also indicated that life skills activities were included within training related to farming activities:

Building the capacity and skills of women in economic activities (agriculture-livestock-life skills). (P9)

Another participant stressed that life skills activities were woven into the agricultural training:

So it is not only an agricultural issue. Women do literacy and basic numeracy and simple mathematics and some life skills training, and nutrition, and health care. We do a lot of activities especially with community-based projects such as [those] in Yemen. There are many educational [activities] and it is very difficult to talk about all of them. (P7)

It was also noted that these activities enabled women to access family planning services if they wished to do so, something that was not traditionally considered because they were excluded from decisions about family planning as well as decisions concerning ownership of family assets.

The literacy and numeracy classes were largely intended to support farmers in getting the best prices for their product by doing good deals. As one participant expressed it:

Our programmes are not education itself...it's more practical to save them from extinction and to help them to go to the market. (P7)

In fact, the demand from women for literacy classes was huge. "When you go to the community the main request is that they need literacy training - it is their priority" (P7). More than half were in the 15-24 age group, indicating a real awareness of the importance of education or their rights, or both. In the final year of the project, as many women completed literacy training as in all the other years together. Women who completed the first course asked for a second. Tutors were selected from among the women who were respected and recommended by the other women in their village and were trained. A few were given intensive training outside the village, with some gaining a professional qualification. The results delighted at least one of the IFAD project staff (P1) who attributed achievement to the quality of teachers on the project compared with that of teachers in rural schools:

Can you believe that women who graduated from these classes, they are much better, they read and they calculate and they do budgets better than the students who graduated from the governmental schools in year nine? (P1)

The level of attendance by younger women and the enthusiasm for a follow-on class supports this. The progression suggests that, for some, at least, the opportunities and the abilities under 'capabilities' and the 'agency' operated to create 'achieved functionings', whatever was happening in the family or the wider village community.

There was a broader 'train the trainers' initiative within the project, enabling women who had taken up other opportunities to become trainers during and after the project in topics such as business skills as well as life skills. The aim was to enable these women to help others in their communities.

On the other hand, a lot of work we do...a Train the Trainers programme for women in villages to train people. So we empower local communities in many ways and the trainers can earn a small amount of money for training. (P7)

One vital feature was that women who benefited from this kind of personal progression then became a role model in their local area, thus encouraging other women. Having such role models was thought to have supported "many women [who had] started to have small shops and many [to have] become the main earners of the house" (P7).

The importance of role models was reflected in IFAD's recruitment of field teams consisting of one man and one woman to separately mobilise the men and women in the community, as described by three individuals:

They [women] participate because every programme has a field team of women and field team of men. Women work with women and men work with men. (P1)

We mobilised, I mean the project mobilised to recruit 2 officers, one male and one female. The male mobilises the men and the female mobilises females, but towards the end of the project you find men and women are together and because they understand and become more aware and more involved in development, this mechanism has proved very successful. (P2)

[The] IFAD policy framework of gender ensures that it is in all levels, even the staff of the project and programmes. (P8)

One person particularly highlighted the importance of following the principle of gender equality within the organisation before promoting it outside and even said that a woman director might bring certain advantageous qualities to the post:

Generally, I believe that women are more strategic in thinking and understanding than men...most people will disagree with me about this concept, but they are patient enough to listen to the people. As a director, you need a lot of patience and also you need a lot of understanding. As a woman, when you go to the communities, particularly when you reach women, it will be easier but as a man it is not easy. As a woman it will be more advantageous, particularly in the field that we are working in. In rural development, I think having women makes a huge difference. (P8)

This was not necessarily easy to achieve with project staff recruited within the country. It was noted that, unfortunately, women did not have a very strong position and so it was essential to convince the right people who believed in IFAD's work. In the words of one participant:

Some challenges come from project management...where you really want to support women, you have to have [the] project manager and project staff. Unfortunately women don't have a very strong position and so you have to make sure you convince the right people who believe in our work...Our field staff, people on a project, people have to be two - one man and one woman, and it is easy for a woman to go to speak with a woman, and man to go and speak with man. So all of these cultural and social issues you have to know about them in a management team. (P7)

It could be seen that male nationals were less enthusiastic about recruiting women, as illustrated by the following quotes:

I think it does not matter if women do the work or men, it makes no difference in the field visit or project management. (P2); and

I think it is more important that we have the plan for our work and the design of our project and the mechanism is more important than the person because a

person without a strategy is reflected in the design and in the implementation and that doesn't help. It is not important who does the work - women or men – it is the way we work in the field and the way we design our project. (P2)

This view certainly does not reflect IFAD's commitment to equality, but clearly represents the people who delayed the project director's appointment for more than a year because they wanted a man. So, the last quotes do not say what they actually mean; rather, it does matter to them that the work should be done by a man. Some of the female participants referred to the fact that the society was not fully supporting females, which seems to be a great understatement.

The benefits were expressed more warmly by female Yemeni IFAD staff than by Yemeni men, as shown in the following quotes by male participants. Differences in what the men highlight, such as 'small enterprises' versus 'businesswomen' and the associated degree of acceptance by the speakers, suggests that patriarchal culture continues to exert a stronger influence on some individuals than on others:

Women are accepted by their communities to take part in activity planning, to be members of the user groups and associations, and to take literacy classes and open their own small enterprises. This is a big breakthrough in a conservative society like Yemen. Such activities were not accepted before the projects accessed target communities. (P3)

We have seen many examples of women who are now businesswomen and independent, and they also have [much more] social acceptance and recognition than before and I have written [about a] number of success stories I can share with you. (P2)

Non-Yemeni men may have found it much easier to be as enthusiastic as the women. One was very keen to share what he called a 'beautiful quotation' from a female beneficiary has said read out the following during the interview:

I feel I am more empowered than ever before, and above all I can see the light at the end of the tunnel that my family and I have been living in for decades. This is just the beginning not the end. (as told to P8)

This supports the view of the benefits for women in a participatory process:

They do fantastic things in this process. When you go to the rural communities, they are conservative and after one year women and men together, they go to one place, one room to work, and to do monitoring and evaluation for the programmes that work with them...also, we can say [that] during development interventions we can change the culture in a positive way. And this is [an] important thing. (P1)

The issues around gender and culture are examined further in section 8.6, in the context of the impact of social influences on decision making.

8.4 Safety and security

Two main aspects of security and safety were identified; one was the impact on poverty reduction and development projects, and the other was the wider long-term impact on stability and progress in the country. The relationship between them was that development is needed now for sustainability and for some protection against greater instability in the future. In the words of one participant “We can say development is needed for sustainability, against instability in the future” (P1).

The disruption to projects that resulted from civil unrest, civil war and humanitarian crises meant not only that the situation became dangerous for IFAD staff and field visits were reduced or cancelled but also that future programmes were put at risk as it would be very difficult to recruit international staff.

One of the main difficulties in the current life for the development organisations in Yemen is the social and political unrest. (P8)

The risk so far and the first risk and challenge is the security but, like in 2011, during the crisis, actually our projects survived and rural areas was far from the city where tensions were highest and they were not affected but in general when you have a crisis and you feel the crisis is increasing and you have many security issues that...you can't go to the field...like now, we don't have...we don't have a mission and international staff and that is another risk. (P2)

With one exception, the Arab Spring revolution was generally perceived in a negative light because it had lost its direction, had caused increased disruption to services and led to political and social unrest. Feelings were strongly expressed; one participant called it a curse, while three others specifically mentioned the ongoing political crisis between politicians and religious groups, together with the greed and corruption of leaders who did not care about ordinary people. It was reported that “security and safety [had] become a critical issue since 2011” (P16) due to the delays and stoppages to government services as well as development projects.

The contrasting views are illustrated in the following quotes:

I think we are more positive after the revolution. With the new government, I think some of them are new ministers and the people in charge are good and very supportive of our work. (P7)

For the Arab Spring revolution, I don't really see positive things about it. I agree with young people's calls for change and about the high level of unemployment rate, but these things could be solved by dialogues, not by destroying and stopping the services provided by the government and local authorities. (P10)

Many services have been disrupted by the resignation of the head of state and the changes of government and the leadership of the ministries. Much of the work

has been stopped or delayed due to these changes, which affect the progress of our programmes and the level of achievements. (P16)

I unfortunately see it as a curse. It has damaged what we tried to build for more than 30 years. We are going backwards, and society is going to be divided more and more. God knows where this is going to take us but, believe me, we are facing a dark time and we need a miracle to take us out of this chaos and its negative impact. I am not saying we were in a golden age before 2011, but we are losing what is in our hands because of the greedy and careless politicians and religious people who seek to sabotage the achievements of the main revolutions in September and October 1962. (P11)

There was pride in the fact that in contrast to many organisations IFAD had managed to continue working throughout 2011 and 2012. “But we didn’t close our programmes. IFAD never closed its programmes” (P8). However, supervision missions were cancelled in 2012 and disruption increased as a result of the 2015 war, so IFAD has had to pause operations until the situation improves. The repeated cycles of civil unrest are a strong negative public conversion factor.

8.5 Partnership, participation and power

Participants did not all agree on who they considered as partners, perhaps not unexpectedly, as different individuals had different links with other organisations depending on their employing organisation and their position within the organisation. Some individuals preferred the term stakeholders, while others distinguished between partners as the government and key ministries, other stakeholders and donors. Some preferred to distinguish between the government, donors and beneficiaries and to describe the process as participatory.

However, there were differences in how ‘participatory’ was understood, depending on the particular role and experience of the individual research participant. For example, someone with a ministry background was clear that ‘participatory’ meant “in participation with the beneficiaries” (P2), although the same person described the development of a gender strategy as participatory, in the sense it involved the government and field staff from the projects. There were other examples of this kind of confusion which, I think, was probably explained by a lack of experience of how these western terms could work when applied to a rural development project in Yemen and a lack of experience of participatory working among people not directly involved in IFAD field work. This indicates a huge cultural shift would be required by a number of people at various levels and in different positions, including some international

consultants who were used to delivering their expertise to people who they perceived to know much less than they did in previous projects.

IFAD was striving to adopt a participatory approach, for example preparing its gender strategy with involvement from field staff to benefit from their experience as well as getting feedback from other stakeholders and donors through a series of meetings and workshops. The government was generally considered to be the main partner but there was some confusion in some minds about what this meant in practice. On the one hand, every step had to be agreed with the government and relevant ministries and “the project actually is a government project” (P2). On the other hand, the same person stated that IFAD had autonomy in implementation and, although the government was represented in the steering committee of each project, asserted:

The government doesn't interfere in management or the selection of the staff, for bureaucratic reasons and corruption and so on, but in the end they are the government projects. (P2)

In fact, as IFAD reports had shown (p. 123 refers), it took more than a year to resolve the issue of appointing a female director because the approved selection panel had preferred a female candidate who was unanimously agreed to be the best qualified and experienced person. This suggests strong interference from at least one representative of a ministry or the government, an assertion backed up by another IFAD staff member who observed they appointed staff who did not meet the expectations of the project or organisation (P5).

The government also has a role in this...appointing staff that did not meet the expectations (P5)

Sometimes ‘partners’ was used to describe organisations such as those who could provide rural financial institutions. Yet when a community contributed to the costs of a project, for example being required to fund 60% of drinking water installations, this was termed ‘community participation’, which probably indicates a hierarchical view, with those who have more money (and power) at the top and the community at the bottom. A contrasting view of women in the community partners was expressed by another person in a similar organisational position:

IFAD not only helps improve the livelihood of target poor rural women, but also empowers them to become indispensable partners in the development of their communities. (P3)

Despite these differences in the use of terminology, it was generally agreed that participatory rural development involved local communities in contributing to programme and project planning by identifying their own needs and priorities and, importantly, plans being adjusted to reflect those needs and priorities. This could only be done in Dhamar after the community organisations had been set up and villages, if not all individuals, had been given the capacity for voice. The follow-on project for Dhamar would be able to involve beneficiaries from the very beginning, but scaling up to other governates would require community organisations to be set up before a full participatory approach was possible from the beginning.

According to the interview responses, there remain some serious issues to be resolved regarding working relationships. As illustrated by participant quotes, these can affect individuals working for the project, and the design and implementation of other programmes and projects. At times the difficulties are related to how individuals operate and at other times they reflect the bureaucratic procedures or muscle-flexing of organisations. Power relationships at both the individual and organisational levels are involved as well as differences in aims and understandings.

Responses to questions about whether IFAD worked with other organisations reflected a variety of perceptions. Some participants highlighted the importance of co-ordination to effective implementation in the field:

At the ground level, we have our own coordination mechanism and strategy with the different donors. We have regular meetings with them to understand what their activities and our activities are and how can we cooperate with each other. It is joint implementation most of the time. (P8)

I have been in the country talking to people, local communities, government and partners to make sure we are working together and to know their priorities in this project - a participatory approach. (P7)

The strength of these projects is the result of working in partnership with local authority and community leaders...so usually the projects and its activities are implemented and observed by local partners such as national NGOs and local authorities. (P9)

A number of other responses referred to co-ordination at a higher level between donors.

Wherever we are working, we always have a coordination mechanism and coordination matrix already prepared even during the project design. We see the interventions from the different donors and the organisations which are already working there...and of course we don't want to duplicate the programmes and activities and we see that we are complementary with them...We inform any other new donors that we already that we are already working in this area and these

are our activities, so that we make sure that the financial and human resource capital will not be wasted...and we always complement each other...and then at the higher level, we always have the donor coordination mechanism, particularly in Yemen. We have a donor coordination framework shared with the Ministry of Planning and also with UN agencies and IFAD is part of it and all the donors are mapping their activities. (P8)

IFAD coordinates with the agencies working in rural areas to make synergies and achieve maximum support to rural poor people. Some of these agencies are co-financers of IFAD supervised projects, such as the European Commission and IDB [Islamic Development Bank]. (P3)

In my view there is a coordination relationship and there is no duplication in implementing the quality of the targeted programmes and areas. (P9)

One participant was clear that the government was the only partner, although IFAD worked with other organisations, but the working relationships were defined in a strange way, perhaps indicating a perception that IFAD's power depended on the government and that this power gave them or entitled them to control over other organisations. It was stated that:

You know, IFAD doesn't work with anybody other than the Government...[then, in response to a slightly later question]...We do work with other organisations. Recently, before, we used to work with the World Bank in the Aldaleh project. It was financed by IFAD and supervised by the World Bank WB in 2009, then IFAD decided to take over the supervision. (P2)

Some other participants referred to the specific Ministries IFAD worked with rather than government, perhaps recognising that IFAD was engaging with different organisations with their own aims and strategies, as well as with different individuals.

One participant stated:

Yes, we work with the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Agricultural Ministry, Fishery Ministry and Financial Ministry... IFAD works with communities but sometimes they try to work with the governmental organisations as a kind of the capacity building for this organisation for sustainability and literacy. (P1)

A second participant highlighted the importance of working with the Ministry of Education:

We are working with MoE...the adult education. We work with the Ministry of Education for Authority for Adult Educations (جهاز محو الامية) so we used to work with them as the counterpart for the education, and the life skills is the other side. Also, we work with Ministry of Social Affairs. (P2)

However, several problems were identified in working with the government and ministries including late payments which held up project implementation, excessively bureaucratic procedures and, perhaps most tellingly, lack of support for some initiatives. One person summed these up as:

- 1 - delayed government contribution affecting the functioning...affecting the operation of projects.
- 2 - routine procedures for the execution of projects at the level of the ministries concerned.
- 3 - the Government is not convinced of certain development programmes (P9)

Additional difficulties in working with the government were reported as:

The government also has a role in this, they slowed the procedures, appointing staff that did not meet the expectations or did not facilitate related difficulties, like logistics or many other obligations. (P5)

Two further significant problems were identified by different people, both related to the ability of government employees to meet the requirements of their roles. One person stated:

Government policies are usually designed by a group of policy makers who sometimes know less about local communities. Maybe that is why some projects ended up with less or no positive outcomes unless if it is achievements on papers. (P13)

Another reflected on the lack of appropriately trained staff and on IFAD's role in providing a form of on-the-job training, stating:

With the government, they have very low capacity. All of the ministries they have many, many people working there and they have no quality or motivation. Ideally...we don't have project management training for them...but because they learn by working with us, they can learn by doing and without being fully responsible for the project. (P7)

Bureaucracy was seen to occur in donor organisations as well as ministries. As P5 explained:

I saw in some projects, the donors with governmental officials planned for some projects and then the approval of these projects firstly by donors takes some time, then comes to the government for approval and ratification, then goes back to donors and then finally the preparation phase takes place. [Preparation means] starting, choosing the project location, staffing, equipment, logistics etc...all these stages take some time - 1-2 years - while prices are increased, other donors may have already started in the same interventions or may be the same areas, changes occur in politics and policies etc...all these factors are causing discrepancies during the implementation process. (P5)

Another participant remained less convinced about the smoothness of co-ordination arrangements generally, as well as with donors in particular, noting that donors' requirements for innovation and their wish for recognition could negatively affect development and sustainability. They asserted:

As far as we know, the relationship between IFAD and other donors is characterised by shared coordination and cooperation...on the other hand, everyone would like to be distinguished in their approach and in providing assistance...In my opinion, the main factors that are influencing effective implementation of donors policies in Yemen are as follows....Coordination - there is a lack of effective coordination either between donors themselves, or donors

and government, beneficiaries and government and beneficiaries and donors. There must be control and well-defined channels of communication between all those stakeholders, which in my opinion will keep the level of development in a steady base of growth. Sustainability - each project financed by any donor tries to come up with new ideas, differentiated objectives and a new approach, even if the interventions are the same This makes sustainability difficult and costly, especially when we take into consideration the lack of government resources and beneficiaries' capacities as well as keeping the same activities. (P5)

The same individual referred to specific problems encountered with some donors, saying:

There are also some difficulties which come from donors themselves, some donors did not fulfil their financial obligations, they changed sectors of interventions, or they diminished the amount of aid. (P5)

Perceptions of donors' selection and appointment of international consultants ranged from positive and necessary through necessary to unhelpful if the consultant was not appropriately selected or managed. The positive view was expressed as:

When it comes to the implementation phase the donors in general should use professional experts, people who know how, and who have alternative solutions to difficulties being addressed. (P5)

It was recognised that international consultants were less useful in the field. In the words of one participant:

We also have an experienced international advisor, however, in the field work national workers are much easier when working with local community. It is not necessarily an issue of trust, maybe an issue of communication...maybe when you reach a local community that you understand their accent, their culture and so you get your message across easier. (P2)

Local consultants recognised that the appointment of international consultants was a donor requirement which was written into high level agreements, one stating:

I understand the fact that to have international development workers means it is a requirement by the funders and it is part of the agreement between the government and the donors or between international agencies and national NGOs. (P13)

One participant (P15) who worked as an international consultant described the role in terms of following the plan and, importantly, acknowledging the support of national project staff where this was needed, saying:

International consultants work with national workers based on the agreed strategic plan between donors or funders and the government. Most of our work involves the evaluation stage and monitoring the progress of the projects and sometimes delivering workshops or training with close support from national project workers. (P15)

However, working relationships with international consultants were perceived by some national workers to break down in the field. This reflected certain difficulties with

the concept of participation in the sense that participation should require everyone involved in project design and delivery to contribute their unique understanding and skills for the benefit of all. One participant acknowledged that local workers lacked sufficient knowledge to discuss projects with international experts but questioned both the number of experts employed and, at times, their contribution, stating:

There are two main things I need to address here. Firstly, the main challenge during the policy process - and it is not a case of IFAD only - but I can confidently say that - for most of the international development projects - people, particularly from the local side, are not qualified enough to discuss development projects because they have little or no experience in this field. Yes, they have very good experience in their own field, when they are representing their ministries and the government side. However, this is not enough when they sit and discuss development projects with international development experts.

Also, the government should discuss the component of international consultants as, in many cases, funders have their own ready list of international consultants before even proposing names to the government which results in the list being agreed and included in the project's components without many details. I am not saying it is not good to have qualified development consultants as I believe that they for sure are going to add value to the projects during the implementation and evaluation...but what I am trying to say is that sometimes there is no need to have many of them...and also some of them have a lack of local awareness of the country, culture and flexibility during community meetings. (P9)

The same participant gave several examples of where relationships broke down. The first quote illustrates how national workers can feel taken advantage of:

Sometimes when we work with international workers, we face some challenges. For example, in one of my projects in a rural area, the head office sent an international development expert to help to evaluate a project and also to run some workshops. I was asked by the head office to be with her during her work. In fact, my colleagues and myself did almost all of her work and also at the end of her contract, the head office asked me to write the final reports because she could not do it and she had missed the deadline. Actually, there are people who have a lot of experience on paper but on the practical side these people have no experience. (P9)

The second quote illustrates how IFAD's flexibility to respond to beneficiary needs is not reflected in the work of all international consultants, perhaps reflecting the donor's view of adhering to plans at all costs:

Another example is about working with experienced and thoughtful international development consultants. Personality is important when approaching local people and working with them. For example, in our work we have to follow the programme's plan during implementation which means to be careful with the plan and the budgets...however, sometimes we need to shift some components from one category to another or extend the components or cancel something based on the needs and requirements. Therefore, for some international consultants moving or shifting components from one level to another is not permitted even though it is important and necessary. For others who are more aware about the

fieldwork and local community needs, they are more flexible and have agreed with us after a deep and respectful discussion. So, personality is important too, especially when it comes to who is working with who, on what and where. From my extensive experience in development organisations, personality contributes to hindering or assisting in making the necessary decisions in the supervisory stages of development projects. (P9)

The same participant (P9) gave a third example contrasting the approaches taken by two international consultants. The differences were attributed to personality, which is likely to have affected the way in which the consultants chose to exercise power when dealing with the national worker. The participant stated:

Another example of the importance of character is from one of the projects I work with. The head office sent us two European experts from different countries and backgrounds. Both of them had the same level of international development expertise, however, one had a negative and frustrating attitude while the other was understanding and flexible and therefore our work with this consultant was more helpful to the project and us because they acted as the team leader. [This one] was the more flexible, listening to us and our views, but the other one was stubborn and tyrannical and that negative personality caused us problems when evaluating some of the work. (P9)

A different participant also cited an example of when an international consultant met the donor's expectations without meeting the stated goal of the role regarding a different project, saying:

I remember, an international female expert came to help us to improve our services towards women in our branches. We shared with her our reports including many success stories about women's empowerment and the level of support we gave them to achieve that. Our plan with her was to support us to find ways to make our activities better and more useful for our target groups in order to benefit and attract more female participants...but, she didn't, actually. She just focused on those successful stories and we felt we did well enough before she arrived but it was a requirement as part of our agreement with the funder. (P12)

Power relationships affect the ability to challenge donors and international consultants. As the same participant stated:

Another important issue is the fact that we cannot question those funders or feel capable of criticising the policies or the quality of their work - the same with the local authority. We are not confident enough or we feel we have no protected right to question them and ask to see the report or the budgets and ask for a detailed report of project expenditure. (P12)

In agreement with an earlier statement that the plan was more important than the gender of the person responsible for implementing it, one participant asserted that traditional management supported by good practical experience could address the problems, saying:

In my opinion these challenges could be addressed by using good planners who are familiar with all expected risk, designing of relevant and well-organised projects build on local demands and needs, recruiting of well experienced managers and by creating an effective controlling system, since most of the difficulties occurred during the implementation process and finally minimizing time between planning and implementation. (P5)

However, this ignores the importance of interpersonal relationships, the inequalities, the power relationships and the human element in project design and delivery. 'Well experienced managers' are not necessarily good at managing people and relationships if they are project specialists.

There are also relationships with delivery organisations to consider. IFAD commissions many of its project activities from national and local organisations including NGOs so there is a great deal of co-ordination and communication involved in making a participatory approach a reality. There are times when IFAD staff have had to take over the work, for example the literacy classes and establishing a new small rural finance organisation, because they have been let down by donors or contracted organisations who are less committed to either a partnership or a participatory approach.

All the actions of the various parties involved contribute to how well partnership and participatory approaches actually work, which in turn will typically affect the outputs and outcomes of the project. For individual beneficiaries, this will also affect the opportunities they are offered, any extension of their capabilities and the functionings they achieve. It has therefore been important to examine how partnership and participation were perceived by IFAD staff, staff from some of the ministries, international and national consultant and field staff from NGOs.

Social norms have already begun to intrude heavily on the analysis but are further considered in the next section.

8.6 Influence of social norms on decision-making

This section examines how social norms were seen to affect my research participants and potentially the progress and outputs of the Dhamar project. There are three dimensions to this: the country culture, the organisation culture, and the position of the individual within their employing organisation.

In terms of the country culture, there were several issues of language and gender norms which add to those identified in the documentary analysis, as well as some conflict in decision-making and the influence of three dominant (mainly male) elite groups. Almost all the participants were comfortable, to varying degrees, talking about women empowerment, or empowering women and youth. One person preferred “youth and women”, commenting:

IFAD works to empower the youth to create jobs and more opportunities for them and for women as well in agricultural and non-agricultural activities (P2).

This phrasing may be more acceptable to male politicians and officials steeped in traditional culture and thus help to get the message about women across. Alternatively, it may represent the general discomfort surrounding ideas of empowerment and gender mainstreaming which runs very deep in Yemeni society. As another participant (P11) observed:

The term ‘empowerment’ - when it is attached to women’s projects or activities - causes most concern in our society, particularly with conservative or religious people, men or women...for example, gender and empowerment are not easy terms to use in open public talks, events or local conferences. Many male writers - and unfortunately the majority of them from academia - are against anything related to the terms feminist, feminism, gender or women and empowerment as they relate it to challenging the religion and culture and traditional norms. I remember in the 1990s and the beginning of 2000, many academic lecturers and researchers published many articles against any women or organisations talking about gender and empowerment. A university women’s centre which was funded by the Dutch government was closed down because of that movement against the centre. (P11)

Whilst it was acknowledged that there were activities for women, participant views differed, from not being a special project to being a way of compensating for difficulties in achieving a 50/50 gender balance in committees with more influence, such as decision-making committees at district or governate level. These two views are illustrated by the following quotes, the first of which still involves youth, despite the best efforts of the speaker. Moreover, the use of the phrase ‘positive bias’ carries similar meanings to ‘positive discrimination’, and suggests that the speaker is uncomfortable with, or even biased against, the idea of gender equality. The ‘we’ suggests that the speaker is referring to either the people in the employing ministry, or men in general. The second quote reinforces this view; the threat referred to would seem to mean that men feel threatened, but it could also mean that it could make a whole community feel their values were under threat.

Women's activities are within but not a special project on its own that targets women. It is mainstream...we, from the beginning we think...actually, we call it a positive bias. It is a positive bias towards women and youth because we know that women are marginalised and they are in more need of empowerment, so we have some positive bias towards targeting women and youth. (P2)

As you know, in our society, because of the culture, a conservative society, even if the programme targets both men and women, for women, it is difficult for them to have access to all opportunities because of this culture that causes threat. So we should focus on them in some activities to make sure that they will be involved. (P1)

The follow-on upscaled project will target youth as well as women and will have ring-fenced funding for them together. The two quotes above suggest that it may be challenging to preserve activities for women at the level they would like. IFAD's preferred approach for trying to achieve this was described as:

To take the method of persuasion and dialogue...and part of the responsibility for finding solutions rests with the project Management and Coordination Office...we share it. (P9)

Traditions, customs and culture in this deeply conservative and patriarchal culture run right the way through project design and implementation, and of course will affect what happens after a project has finished. Individuals can be caught between the dominant country culture and newer and different ways of thinking in an internal struggle to preserve their heritage and identity while trying to move forwards. The same speaker of the first quote above (P2) also acknowledged that women who have become independent businesswomen have gained social acceptance and recognition but totally failed to, or chose not to, see the importance of having a female leading the project. This suggests that it may be acceptable for women to improve their social role at the level of the village but not to rise to the level where higher administrative salaries (resources) are effectively reserved for men and for men to distribute. It also indicates that women are not expected to step outside the gendered role to which they have been allocated, thus adaptive preferences or adapted preferences may be what some women will espouse.

The prevailing culture in Yemen means that some conflict in decision-making is inevitable between people employed by the national and local authorities (the vast majority of whom are men), some IFAD staff drawn from very different cultures, and international consultants whose diverse backgrounds affect their knowledge, experience and behaviours. It also means that while funders may impose conditions of equal numbers, this may not happen if project implementation staff do not believe

in it or approve of it. Interestingly, the uptake of literacy and numeracy classes among men was very poor, possibly due to lack of a financial incentive as suggested in the project evaluation report but possibly due to lack of effective mobilisation or encouragement by male field staff, although this was not investigated in the present study. The number of men village extension leaders who received training was also low at 35% of the target and the number of grants awarded was correspondingly low, thus the evaluation report also suggested that the project failed to motivate the men sufficiently.

Unfortunately, the majority of people wholeheartedly support the status quo which is perpetuated by three elite groups: male academics, as illustrated by the quote from participant (P11) above; religious leaders, who are almost exclusively men; and politicians, who are also almost exclusively men. Based on my own experience but very hard to evidence from literature and not explored with participants in order to avoid the withdrawal of most participants from the study, religious leaders use and interpret particular passages from the Qur'an and the Hadith to tell people what is halal (permitted) and haram (forbidden). They extend their authority to include such things as women not being permitted to wear certain clothes or colours and whether they can use mouthwash to sweeten their breath during Ramadan when they are fasting. In everyday matters such as girls attending school, yes, they can do so, but it is better for them to remain at home. In cities, some fathers educate their daughters at home if they have the money and time to do so, and indeed the Qur'an stipulates that all Muslims should educate themselves. However, tradition and male dominance have typically determined that such education should be limited for girls to what their mothers should tell them, usually through their fathers' knowledge and influence, which in turn will be gained from the local mosque.

The reasoning given by the religious leaders provides a screen that the government can hide behind. The Yemen government often signs up to international declarations and agreements; it knows that if it does not, its financial support from some important donors will end. It has never passed a law setting a minimum age for marriage, which the parliamentary Sharia committee rejected as being opposed to Sharia law. No law has been passed against physical or psychological violence against women. This provides an excuse for families to say they do not allow their daughters out because it is unsafe to do so, even when levels of civil unrest are low. It also provides an excuse

for male family members and other men to commit acts of violence against girls and women.

With regard to education, the rights of all girls as well as boys are enshrined in law. In theory, girls and women are encouraged to continue their studies to higher education and to join the workforce if they wish to do so. One participant (P16) stated:

Basically, education in Yemen is guaranteed to all. This right has been written into the state's constitution in article 37. For example, the General Education Law No. (45) of 1992 affirms equality of opportunity between girls and boys and guaranteed free and compulsory education, as well as gender equality in the use of educational opportunities offered by educational institutions. Girls and women are encouraged to continue their studies to higher education and to join the workforce if they want to. (P16)

Some participants felt progress was being made despite limited resources. One said:

The government has adopted many policies to support girls, particularly rights to education and has also signed most, if not all, UN legislation such as CEDAW [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women] and gender and equality acts and we are working with UN Women and have participated in nearly all of the Arab and international women's meetings and conferences. I am not saying we are fully implementing that legislation, but we are trying with our limited financial and technical capacity. (P11)

Other participants felt strongly that this was not the case, the law was not protecting girls or women, and clear policies were needed to enable legislation to be put into practice. One in particular (P12) was clearly angry that girls could effectively be sold into marriage and stated quite forcefully:

I believe that, in a country like Yemen we need a clear policy or law to support and protect women and girls. Basically, because society is not really supporting them, let's say starting from the right to basic education to the academic level, and the right to question early and arranged marriage and so on with other things. Girls in some places are still used as a product. Whoever is ready to pay, her family would not mind giving her to him, even if she is still a child under 15 years old.

Why I am saying that is because in Yemen we all know we need laws or legislation or clear policies for women to protect their rights, right to education, to work, to feel safe inside and outside her house. However, because I work with women and on women's issues, I would say...yes, there is a kind of legislation mentioning women's rights...but I see these issues only timidly highlighted...even though it is guaranteed by the state's constitution. (P12)

The problem is not so much the lack of laws but the failure to implement them; new laws will not help if they are not implemented.

The high level of female illiteracy in rural areas is typically explained as the product of early marriage, a lack of female teachers and a shortage of girls' schools and the distance to the nearest girls' school, as shown in the words of two participants:

In rural areas, girls also leave school at an early age before finishing their secondary level. This is because of many socio-cultural factors...for example, early marriage of girls, lack of female teachers and also the low number of schools, especially girls only classes, and sometimes the distance of the school from home is an issue, particularly in rural areas. (P16)

Most of the rural families prefer to keep their girls indoors, especially if the schools are far from home or there are no female teachers. (P13)

It is unbelievable that when projects were developed with IDOs and donors to achieve the millennium goals, more provision was not made for girls' schools and teachers because this would have been an essential requirement for achieving the MDGs. The only possible conclusion is that the government agreed with the religious leaders, possibly without actually saying it anywhere they could be overheard, that such developments were not necessary. In vocational engineering training, the absence and drop out of girls is similarly explained on the basis of understanding the culture, "the type of education that girls should have" (P10); even now, this kind of gender bias continues to exist to a lesser extent in the UK, and concerns what are considered the proper roles for boys and girls, with no need for justification using religious texts. The gap between legislation and practice in Yemen is clearly shown by participant P10 who explained:

Our educational training and programmes are open to males and females, but males benefit more from it and continue their studies until the end of the programmes. It is about understanding the culture, about the type of education that girls should have. Also, there are other challenges. for example, where they are going to work if they graduate from a vocational institute as most of the students end up in factories or mechanical garages where girls are not really welcomed. This is not about policies or government strategies only, but it is about societal attitude and behaviour. (P10)

This further indicates that some girls and women espouse adaptive preferences. The need for role models was recognised by some, acknowledging that It is difficult to find women who wish to take up training for a career and have the support of their families to allow them to travel to the capital city for training. Families find it difficult to accept the idea of their daughters travelling alone and may allow it only if there are family members who they can live with. One supportive female project manager can make a difference but it is still a struggle to find role models who will support the development of other role models. As P7 explained:

In the management section you need women...and those women themselves, they become a role model in the local area and some of these women working with IFAD projects, it becomes very important for them... they believe that women can take the responsibility...and then these women help other women...However, it is not easy to find women to take that role in in this type of project. I think they have to have support from their families. There are many women who trained as a technician and in health and they even went to Sana'a to do training and from the beginning it became difficult for their family to accept the idea of letting them travel alone, but when you find women [who] can be in the leading position, then the others will follow. (P7)

The effect of culture on recruitment of project staff is similar; men are more likely to accept the status quo, while women are more likely to need the support of their families to do the work. However, national workers are much easier to accommodate than international consultants when working in the field with local communities and women national workers are essential for work with women.

It was asserted that the developed countries had the strongest voice in policy formulation, management and financing (P6), yet they are cautious about challenging the culture any further by demanding greater gender equality in case the country government then refuses to work with them and turns to Islamic funders who are more likely to tolerate or share their values regarding the role of women in the home and society. They operate in Yemen only with the agreement of the government.

In addition to the social norms of the overarching culture, the influence of donors' own social norms can be felt in such areas as the importance attached to numbers and unit costs compared with investment in community development and a more fully participatory approach. In similar vein, the opinion that some international consultants have of themselves and their own importance or humility, as presented in earlier participant quotes, is certainly attributable in part to what were obviously perceived differences in personality. To preserve anonymity and comply with research ethics, I have not provided the full details of the individuals and organisations referred to, but they must both have been suited to their employing organisations; the more flexible consultant worked for an organisation more inclined towards human development. It was suggested by participant P9 that, in general, the numbers of qualified international development consultants could benefit from being reviewed, and a deep understanding of the culture, combined with a flexible approach, should be essential for a participatory approach in community meetings.

Donors are influenced not only by their own culture, but also by the requirement of their funders to innovate, which can pose problems for sustainability because there is greater willingness to fund innovation than to sustain successful activity. It is true that projects should have an exit strategy and not create long term growth of demand for foreign funding, but in a country like Yemen which lacks national resources and a strong local government structure, there is a high risk that projects will not be sustainable. The expectations of some funders and donors, based on their norms of a return on investment and project management, are not realistic. IFAD is one organisation that does not want to continue providing the same services year after year. It aims to give people a fishing line rather than fish, as the saying goes. However, the extension of capabilities is negatively affected by a lack of resources, especially in a fragile state where donors may or may not keep to financial agreements and governments and other providers may not honour promises, or be unable to honour them due to the political and economic situation.

In practice, IFAD field staff are often drawn from national NGOs, which are widely suspected of being new imports from former colonial rulers. The NGOs who supply these staff were only mentioned by participants who had worked in them and their contribution was not acknowledged, even when they had to complete work that was allocated to an international consultant. Their role in planning was dismissed by participant P5 who only focused on international 'experts' for this stage and did not mention the possibility of developing the national human resource. At this point, the individual consultant's family background and personal history and psychology also come into focus, pointing the way towards how they exercise their own agency within their employing organisation, simply exercise it in return for those who are willing to pay for it.

All these factors have an impact on the design and implementation processes. Firstly, at the design stage of the programme cycle, it is arguable whether IFAD does invite all the stakeholders as claimed:

We invite all stakeholders, we invite all the ministries, we involve the Ministry of Planning then the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Social Affairs and other Ministries and all these stakeholders, also the beneficiaries, will be part of the programme cycle. Within the programme cycle, the experts will be designing it, they will have number of consultation meetings with all the stakeholders then they will design our programmes and what we are going to focus on in the coming three years, four years. (P8)

It was noted earlier that policy makers were perhaps not close enough to the communities, yet local and national consultants and development workers, who are close enough, are not included at the design stage or “given chances during project discussion and implementation” (P9). Whilst some beneficiaries are involved, workers who know them well are not usually involved. As P9 stated:

Truthfully, there are many things, for example, that no matter how local workers talk, no one hears them. (P9)

In view of the comments made about donors’ imposition of international consultants who may not understand the community settings as they would wish to be understood, or adopt a more participatory or partnership way of working with national community development consultants, it is a cause for concern that many international consultants are not required by their employing organisations to consult local and national development workers during the design process.

Another cause for concern is the ability of some of the staff in the administration who are of central importance to implementation, despite the efforts of some project staff to provide them with on-the-job training. The very nature of development projects exacerbates this problem. IFAD clearly invested considerable time and money in developing women from the targeted villages, as well as providing capacity-building courses for administrative staff. However, this was not necessarily true of all community projects. In the words of another participant:

Most of the community development projects lose their value as they are just designed for a short time - such as one-off training programmes - without paying enough attention to train locals to take the lead with extended development activities. (P13)

This points to the need to widen the scope of participation and include sufficient administrative staff in the process to try to create ‘buy-in’ as well as skills and understanding among some local authority staff, in order to give the benefits of a development project at least a better chance of sustainability. Paid involvement of local authority staff and local development workers in evaluation reports could perhaps have a similar effect.

8.6.1 Summary of findings

At this point it is helpful to bring together key findings from the participant interviews under headings which relate to the research questions regarding the involvement and

participation of women in rural development programmes and the challenges IFAD may face in seeking further improvements.

8.6.1.1 Rural women and capability extension

'Capability' involves both skills and opportunities. Participants stressed the benefits of economic empowerment as a necessary first step. Women-led Savings and Credit Group associations created opportunities for a small measure of personal financial independence. Money women earned from small business or part-time employment was seen as acceptable to the community and valued by families as well as seen as enhancing social status; this was more about social position and an indication of how it is respected in the community, and less about personal empowerment.

The importance of literacy, numeracy and life skills classes was perceived in terms of personal benefit, judging by IFAD's willingness to respond to the demand for follow-on literacy and numeracy classes. Like economic empowerment, the classes were seen as a general benefit to families and communities, saving people from 'extinction' by giving them the skills to develop agricultural extension activities and businesses.

Some activities were directed at developing women's self-confidence through knowledge of their rights and at encouraging them to contribute ideas, or become role models through sharing skills, teaching other women, or running Savings and Credit Groups. Others such as health and nutrition were aimed at enabling them to better fulfil their social role as mothers.

Women were certainly involved in all the activities available to them, other commitments permitting, and this was attributed to having IFAD teams of one woman working alongside a man to mobilise the community. Thus there were role models in the IFAD teams for rural women who wanted to go further and, exceptionally, funding was found to give some women the opportunity to take advanced courses.

However, as one participant (P4) highlighted, the inclusion of women in development work and the emphasis on gender equality were accepted from a developmental point of view, which implied these things were not necessarily accepted outside of the context of development programmes and, perhaps, accepted only in order for Yemen to receive the money. Questions arise regarding what happens after the project ends, for example, even if further funding is given to support agriculture, whether additional opportunities for education and personal development will be available for women,

and whether the benefits will extend to their children. Together with the perception of some participants that benefits were only for individual women if they led to better support for the family and community, this leads to consideration of the challenges which IFAD was facing.

8.6.1.2 Remaining challenges

Recent history suggests that the situation is unlikely to improve in the near future; even if the conflict is resolved for a time, the serious damage done by war, cholera, famine and the COVID-19 virus, in addition to persisting corruption and bureaucracy, has created challenges far beyond the scope of IFAD and this thesis.

One of the main challenges is to bring about greater acceptance of women's rights, not only in their village in planning and implementing community development but in their homes and in respect of their own education and their daughters. This requires more persuasion and dialogue at all levels and persuading some men in local and national administrative roles to exercise greater persuasion themselves with tribal and religious leaders. Participant P1 who spoke of empowering the whole community recognised the importance of including men. Without greater committed participation from men at all levels, the challenge of making an equitable distribution from a single pot of funds for women and young men in planned future programmes may be impossible rather than merely very difficult.

To achieve further progress, strengthening of partnership working is needed at all levels. Sustainability is a major challenge, as IFAD has recognised over the last four decades. Sustainability is not helped by donors and donor countries changing priorities; IFAD needs to persuade donors that investing in people now can bring better returns in the longer term and the way to achieve this is through rural participatory development. Closer relationships are needed with other major IDOs who work more directly with the administration on capacity building in the national and local administration.

Relationships between some international consultants and grassroots project workers need to be improved where necessary as poor relationships can negatively affect implementation and design of projects. This relates to working with donors regarding choice of consultant and clear instructions about how to work with local staff and

participants as well as what to do. Local consultants need more opportunities to develop skills of engaging with international consultants.

From a capability approach viewpoint, specific attention also needs to be given to the provision of further opportunities for women to use their new-found personal conversion factors of literacy and other learning. Similarly, access to resources will be needed and this will require the input of international NGOs, government and other donors.

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter has offered an analysis of participants' responses regarding some of the key elements of the social context that affect individual beneficiaries' capabilities and achieved functionings. It has also examined the individual conversion factors and capabilities created by the Dhamar project. Finally, it has explored the influence of social norms on decision-making in organisations responsible for implementing the project and, to a lesser extent, on some of the staff employed by those organisations.

IDOs were shown to be essential to any poverty reduction strategy due to the exceptionally poor state of the country's finances. The importance of economic empowerment for women was a small step out of poverty and out of dependence on the man of the house. IFAD facilitated the setting up of Savings and Credit Groups to help micro-enterprises whether or not they related directly to agriculture. Training was offered in a range of agriculture-related topics in addition to literacy, numeracy and various life skills classes. A follow-on course was added to the initial 9-month course at the request of rural women, more than half of whom were in the 15-24 age group. The high level of demand for these literacy classes demonstrated both the interest and the importance attached to attaining reading and writing skills. Some beneficiaries were able to progress to become literacy teachers and agricultural extension workers, while some others started micro-businesses. Many more were given the chance to develop the capability for voice through IFAD's work on setting up and supporting community organisations.

It was shown that even within the IFAD project not everyone fully understood what partnership and participatory development meant in practice, or shared the same understanding. In similar vein, not everyone was fully committed to the concept of women empowerment. Both these factors were influenced by cultural background and

employing organisation alike. In addition to the issues of traditional patriarchal Yemeni culture, issues of differing organisational cultures were considered to affect how some decisions were made.

The concept of agency was lightly touched upon in terms of how responses of individuals working for the same organisation could differ according to their background and culture and this is explored in more depth in the analysis of my autoethnographic account in the next chapter.

Chapter 9 Analysis of autoethnographic data

9.1 Introduction

In the first part of this chapter, I analyse my story in terms of themes and where they fit into the personal context and agency elements of the capability approach framework. Then in the second part I offer a reflexive account of the analysis process. Under the heading of personal context, I identified five themes: strong women; role models; exposure to other ways of living or wider culture, including reading; social pressures; and opportunities and options.

9.2 Thematic analysis

It was challenging but interesting and useful to try to look at my own data as analytically as I could. It helped that this came after analysing my participants' data where I was looking at how different individuals were perceived, why some women achieved more than others, and how they exercised agency in different ways. The themes which stood out in my data were: strong women, women as role models, exposure to alternative ways of living or wider culture, social pressures, opportunities and options, and agency.

9.2.1 Strong women

I have separated the theme of strong women from women as role models because, as I realised from the Queen of Oranges and the brickmaker as well as my mother, a woman may show tremendous strength when she absolutely follows the traditional pattern of early marriage, many children and, in a rural village, long years of hard work. There may be many strong rural Yemeni women, perhaps most of them, strong in fulfilling that traditional role as well as their expected unpaid agricultural work. A woman may or may not use that strength to adapt to a different situation and culture depending on the circumstances life throws her way. My grandmother was head of the family for a while, as was my mother after the move to Yemen; neither had a man to take on that role.

9.2.2 Role models

Mothers and grandmothers are important role models for all their children. They may set an example of how to manage a household and carry out many farm tasks, or earn

income as my mother did, in her case from sewing. My mother enrolled all her children in school and kept her own knowledge of art and politics up to date whenever she could. Thus she was an important role model for education and my father was not much involved. This contrasts with my older sister whose husband controlled the early marriage of her daughter and whose other daughter did not finish her education either. My older sister had also been living under her father's influence and had an early marriage. Thus it seems that it is much more difficult to be an atypical female role model in rural Yemen if the household is headed by a man. However, in a deeply patriarchal society, women can and do step up when circumstances require. This is not the same as being able to choose freely between various "beings and doings" we may have reason to value. It is more about doing what we have to do to survive and may offer a stark choice between survival and failure to survive.

Writing about the job interview made me realise how damaging the 'wrong kind' of role model can be, where a woman who is privileged in terms of education, and perhaps wealth and family, can use the social and cultural structures to restrict the options available to another woman. It also highlights the fact that in Yemen other wives and daughters, educated, wealthy, or socially privileged by birth or marriage, may similarly use their social role (teacher, manager or even mother) and their social position to limit the choices of other women. With religion as a constant reference point, they may also use the way they dress to indicate they have moral superiority as well as social superiority and that they are therefore entitled to dominate women who have better education and experience than they do.

9.2.3 Exposure to other ways of living or wider culture

There appear to be three key elements to this exposure: exposure to my mother's own experience of swing dresses and love of music, exposure to the differing cultures of Ethiopia and Yemen, and exposure to a wide variety of reading matter. The dresses and music are important for several reasons. Firstly, they simply showed me there were other ways of doing things, even in a traditional Yemeni family. I learned early on that a good person is not defined by what they wear or whether they listen to music but by their words and actions. Even today, a particular colour, smell, taste or sound brings back vivid memories of wonderful times in a different culture. In rural villages in Yemen, you are defined by what you wear and the music you listen to, as well as every other detail of what people tell you that you should or should not do. More

widely, like eating different foods and hearing different languages, I came to understand that my personal identity did not completely depend on being a certain way and I could enjoy different aspects of the cultures I knew (I still love Ethiopian food). The range of reading matter would be unusual for someone of that age in many countries; moreover, novels can exercise the imagination and encourage broader thinking and interest in other cultures. Imagination can open possibilities. Girls who read only school textbooks, and such parts of the difficult language of the Qur'an as they are able to access, have plenty of exposure to imaginings of paradise and hell but may have little else.

9.2.4 Social pressures

Awareness of social pressures was evident not only in terms of what was happening to girls and women (my father's new family, early marriages) but also my lack of confidence which was associated with recognising that keeping quiet and speaking to a diary were a safe option. School was an escape, so one of the reasons for continuing education may have been to escape some of the social pressures. Although there was for some years considerable social pressure to leave school and marry young like all the other girls in the family, education at least did offer me an escape. Later, social disapproval of support and advocacy for women's rights earned me the disapproval of professional women and men as well as my family. These pressures continued until my most recent visit to Yemen. As a grown independent woman, I was still being criticised for being single, driving a car and working.

9.2.5 Opportunities and options

Girls' schools were available in my area at the time I needed them. Financial independence was important to being able to pay my way through education and therefore the opportunity for employment in Sana'a was essential. The combination of taking paid employment and doing a degree required me to leave the family home and live independently. The 'escape' (to something better or at least different) theme runs through the opportunities which were sometimes offered and sometimes sought out. The creation of opportunities for greater professional freedom in terms of freelance training and girls' educational rights also shows that opportunities came with risks.

9.2.6 Agency

Spending time in the 'safe box' rather than with my family indicates a deliberate (if at times subconscious) exercise of agency, as do my decisions about what to read and when to read it. Of course, the reasons for making particular decisions that do not conform to social norms and pressures are complex. There are many psychological factors involved as well as social rules and how they interact with each other, and another thesis would be needed to investigate them. However, what seems to be important in my case is the presence of positive role models, enough exposure to different ways of thinking and being, and the existence or creation of opportunities which allowed me as an individual to exercise agency. The knowledge there were opportunities that had been created for me because of my abilities made me realise that I could also create my own opportunities, however difficult or challenging that might be.

9.3 Self Reflections

The challenges faced by a Yemeni woman in seeking to realise her potential are considerable, if that means defying the social norms. I intended to provide an example of how one woman – me - had extended her capabilities and hoped by sharing my experiences that it would reveal the importance of formal education for rural women and that it would make a great difference if IFAD, and indeed other international agencies, could do more work in the area of formal education. I still believe that, especially when I think of my older sister and nieces, but it has also made me realise that the situation is infinitely more complex. Other Yemeni women with a high enough level of literacy and a safe space for reading may or may not choose a similar path. I have come to understand much better why many rural women might not want to choose my kind of path because they are busy in the house and on the farm from an early age and then get married very young. The social norms and gender structure do not give them much choice but their priority is likely to be earning extra income and any education they receive will need to offer them a way to increase that income for the benefit of the family. Although I found it too painful and distressing to write about many of the incidents which I know have shaped me, I discovered that the process of selecting what to write and trying to analyse the data gave me new insights into the relationship between me and my culture. I understood more about what made me angry and disappointed with IFAD and with my country because they had not done

more for girls' education. This helped me to think more positively and realistically about what IFAD could do differently to create more opportunities for women over time rather than just despairing.

However, I also realised that I had used the phrase 'safe box' without thinking about the things that it was safe from. It was safe from losing people who were so close to me. It was safe from men who disappeared from my life or passed me around within the family as they had a cultural obligation to provide me with somewhere to live. It was safe from the scary sound of the call to prayer which always reminded me that if I did anything wrong I would go to hell. It is not surprising to me now that I kept quiet because if I was quiet enough I would not say or do anything wrong. I guess that is really what some other Yemeni women must feel when they talk about the silk road of marriage: keep quiet, do what the family and community tell you to do, you will not go to everlasting hell.

Chapter 10 Chapter Discussion

10.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters have identified and analysed the findings from three different sources, namely policy and programme documents, participant interviews, and my autoethnographic contribution. The data were analysed using a capability approach within a feminist and critical realist frame to explore a 'multi-layered reality'. The findings are brought together here and discussed in terms of the capability approach before the research questions and objectives are addressed and recommendations made in the concluding chapter. Following a brief reminder of the main findings, each of the key elements needed for extension of capabilities to be as effective as possible (Figure 4.1) is discussed in turn, beginning with the social context and public conversion factors.

10.2 Summary of findings

For ease of reference, the key findings from this case study of educational activities and the opportunities to use them to develop capability in IFAD's Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Programme are summarised in Table 10.1. The table also indicates which of the data sources contributed to the findings. According to perspectives shared by participants in this research, which supports statements in IFAD's documents, the overall picture shows that, through the DPRDP, women beneficiaries gained some important personal conversion factors and new opportunities were made available for some of them to extend their capability. However, these remained largely unsupported by other elements of the capability approach, which suggests that despite expressed optimism, it will not necessarily be easier for them to exercise their agency in the future. Essential social public conversion factors continue to severely limit what women can and control what they should do, through a combination of religious precepts, tribal customs and serious shortage of basic services such as health and education. Environmental conversion factors are also poor, with inadequate road structure, utilities and water supply for agriculture. In addition, there is a long-term lack of safety and security in a country torn apart by recurring political and economic turmoil associated with repeated civil unrest and wars.

Over time the instability has resulted in dependence on foreign aid, for both development and humanitarian purposes. Rural women have very few resources at their disposal; money from the animals and crops for which they are almost wholly responsible is in the hands of men, unless the woman is the head of her household, there are no banks serving rural areas and the Savings and Credit Groups lack a stable co-ordinating financial organisation. When women gain literacy and numeracy skills, there are virtually no resources they can convert into knowledge and opportunities for economic or educational empowerment; the only available reading material in villages is likely to be the family copy of the Qur'an.

The strength of tradition determines many decisions in the country as a whole and in daily life. Culture clashes between IDOs and government bodies and the individuals who work in them are generally unhelpful. In spite of this, the Dhamar project has managed to create some opportunities and provide some of the skills and knowledge needed to take advantage of those opportunities. A number of individual women have succeeded in exercising their agency to take advantage of this. However, sustainability is questionable in view of the public conversion factors and limited resources.

Table 10-1 Key findings by element of the capability approach framework

Dimension (from Figure 4.1)	Key findings
Social context and public conversion factors	History of recurring civil unrest and wars; economic weakness and instability; high levels of poverty in rural areas; poor infrastructure (utilities, roads, communications) ^{b, c} Social norms of religion and tribal customs restrict women, give power to men Rural women are severely constrained: very limited access to assets, largely excluded from markets, high illiteracy rates, lower primary school enrolment rates, early marriage, restricted movement outside village, little control over childbearing, limited access to decision-making at home and in public affairs ^c Free compulsory education law is not enacted ^d No legal protection against early marriage or violence ^d IFAD: provides some roads, clean drinking water and a few schools. Tension between partnership and participation, and between management by numbers and qualitative outputs/outcomes; avoidance of conflict with political/religious leaders; self-interest ^c
Resources	Yemen cannot meet citizens' need for services ^{b, c} Lack of schools and teachers for girls in rural areas ^{b, c, d} Dependence on foreign aid (development/humanitarian) ^{c, d} Water shortage ^{b, c, e} IFAD: access to finance through Savings and Credit groups ^{c, d}
Social influences on decision making	Culture and religion combine to disempower women and to excuse failure to educate them or allow them to realise their potential; this runs through from top level in country to individual families, with few exceptions ^{c, d, e} IDOs' own cultures also affect decision-making ^c Western ideas can be rejected due to past colonialism as well as religion ^{a, d} At village level cultural constraints may be reduced; men and women work together ^d IFAD: women's rights and empowerment ^{c, d}
Individual conversion factors	IFAD: beneficiaries offered literacy and numeracy; agricultural extension and business skills; some part-time paid opportunities; for the fortunate few, teacher training and similar; life skills; capability for voice ^{c, d} Time available for other activities increased by improved drinking water supplies ^{c, d}
Capabilities	IFAD: opportunities to participate in village groups; control of Savings and Credit Groups; possible small businesses, maybe links to value chains ^{c, d}
Personal context	Many rural girls do not complete primary education or even enrol ^{b, c, e} Educated women struggle to achieve recognition at all levels ^{d, e} Psychology strongly influenced by religion and traditions ^{d, e}
Agency	Many rural women in Dhamar had no previous experience of exercising agency ^{c, d} Diverse reasons for choice ^{c, d, e}

Notes: **a** literature review; **b** context chapter 2; **c** documentary analysis; **d** interviews; **e** autoethnography

10.3 Social Context and Public Conversion Factors

This section discusses the study findings regarding social context and public conversion factors, under the following headings: (i) partnership and participation in IFAD policy and process, (ii) social norms in gender relations, (iii) power and empowerment, (iv) lost in translation, (v) resources, (vi) social influences on decision making, (vii) blame the culture, (viii) extension of capabilities, and (ix) exercising

agency. These headings were selected from a combination of themes in the analysis chapters, themes in the capability literature and emergent issues related to the 'real' layer of reality. For example, 'partnership and participation in IFAD policy and process' was drawn from the Chapter 7 documentary analysis, while 'power and empowerment' was introduced as a separate heading because it highlighted issues in the 'real' layer of reality, to which attention had been drawn in all three data analysis chapters. 'Lost in translation' and 'blame the culture' were also chosen to reflect what was happening in the 'real' layer. 'Social norms in gender relations' adapted the capability literature theme of social norms to focus on the gender relations identified in all the data analysis chapters, while 'social influences on decision-making' and 'resources' were simply adopted from the capability literature. The impact of civil unrest, humanitarian disasters and war is also referred to because it impacts heavily on development programmes.

10.3.1 Partnership and participation in IFAD policy and process

IFAD documents indicated that the Dhamar programme was based on supporting Yemen's strategy for reducing poverty and in agreement with Ministry of Agriculture goals. Outputs and outcomes were expressed in numerical terms as required by the World Bank and other donors and the participatory process was stated but not explained. The initial consultation was goal-oriented based on more traditional stakeholder arrangements because there was no mechanism for citizens at grassroots level to contribute. However, previous projects had been adjusted at the mid-term review and the Dhamar programme established the community organisations to do this more effectively. Findings from some research participants confirmed that the bottom up approach is used, while others saw it was not applied effectively throughout the process.

Documentary analysis distinguished between partner and target groups, while participants' varying use of terms like 'partner', 'stakeholder', 'donor' and 'beneficiary' suggest that overall there is a lack of clarity about the relationships between the parties involved in the participatory rural development programme. This may be about differences between Arabic and English, or may reflect differences in the importance individuals give to some of the parties, or otherwise reflect that IFAD has not always been clear enough in its messages. A 2002 document about participatory development used the terms 'primary stakeholders', 'implementing partners', 'project staff' and 'citizen participation' (IFAD 2002) and the idea of citizen participation might

be too much for a government to accept from IDOs that say they are supporting the government's own plans. The nature of partnership between the government and IFAD is deeply embedded in the state's policies for poverty reduction through agricultural improvement. Some participants felt strongly that IFAD's projects were government projects (P2, P5, P7), indicating that the country might not have the money, but it had power of veto over the programme. It is perhaps an uncomfortable sort of partnership under the surface, as indicated by acceptance "from a developmental point of view", but not a mainstream view, of women's involvement and gender equality (P4).

Moreover, financial and technical assistance can contribute to the fragility of the state's economy if it is misused due to low and ineffectual levels of transparency and the existence of corruption, so that in the long run the state may become dependent entirely on foreign aid (Moyo 2009). In Yemen, almost 95% of capital and operational government expenditure has been shown to be covered by foreign aid and oil revenues (Elayah 2016, p. 87), and oil revenues have been falling for some years. This level of reliance on external support drastically reduces the state's chances of building its human capacity to enable its citizens to reach the kind of levels of knowledge, quality and productivity that are expected in both international trade and human development. Warner (2016) and Mayo (2009) argue that aid could hinder economic development as states become aid-dependent and its impact negates a country's productive potential. My work experience in Yemen and the perspectives shared by participants in this study leads me to agree with them.

The partnership between IFAD and Yemeni NGOs is also uncomfortable, but in a different way. The mention of Yemeni NGOs was almost absent, perhaps because they were assumed to be 'valued delivery partners' as described in other IFAD documents. Project staff at grassroots level often come from NGOs and are essential to reaching the target communities but there was a sense their expertise was not valued by some international consultants and thus not valued by the donor organisations who imposed such consultants. NGOs act as a bridge between grassroots communities, state authorities and international agencies in project delivery. According to studies published at local level, their contacts and services play a significant role in enabling women empowerment (e.g. Kakakhel et al. 2016) and community sustainability (e.g. Hibbard and Tang 2004). The present research

indicates that they can help ensure equal access to opportunities in order to extend women's capabilities, and support women in exercising agency and achieving valued functionings. However, several disadvantages of using local NGOs have been identified in the literature. Local NGOs have been found to lack professional specialists (e.g. Nikkhah et al. Redzuan 2010) which, as one participant suggested, can lead some international consultants to neglect them and their development. Another problem is that donors and governments can neglect some NGOs and favour others (Brass et al. 2018), or simply consider them as a source of cheap labour (Mohan 2002) which may negatively affect the work of some NGOs and how they are perceived. Just as local staff may not be treated in a spirit of either partnership or participation, the same may happen with some national consultants if the international consultant selected by the donor holds a similar view of being favoured or superior in knowledge.

IFAD's commitment to participatory rural development was coloured by the reality of how to reach potential beneficiaries before there was some form of community organisation. Thus, while they started with well-tried initiatives from previous programmes, they adjusted their offering as they went along, being responsive to individuals where they could, most clearly illustrated by the additional literacy classes and the rare but important examples of supporting several individual women to access higher education which were mentioned by participants and in IFAD documents. The response to individuals is very much in agreement with the capability approach.

The literature emphasises that participatory planning can be an effective channel of development if the targeted communities in the targeted areas participate positively and share their experiences and relative knowledge as this gives them opportunities to speak up and share their concerns and responsibilities (Mohan 2007; Cornwall 2003; Craig 1998). Moreover, full participatory development is closely associated with the empowerment of marginalised women in vulnerable communities, provided that it addresses the issues of power relations between men and women, beginning with men and then tackling institutions (Nawaz 2013). However, Mansuri and Rao (2013) are more cautious, noting that not all participatory projects succeed, for reasons which include: unpredictability of context, erratic development of engagement, inadequate responsive support from state, patchy feedback from facilitators and a failure to report problems and learn from them, together with unrealistic expectations on the part of

donors such as The World Bank. In view of the fragility of the Yemeni state, delays to development programmes, and the issue of feedback which excludes local field staff, I agree with Mansuri and Rao that not all participatory projects can succeed, but the model is one to which development interventions should aspire. Based on my own experience of working with international development projects and my personal perceptions of 'unnecessary' baseline studies and inappropriate measures, I would add that the bias towards results-based management with largely predetermined outputs and outcomes, works against achieving a truly participatory process. I would also add that the attitudes of some managers, such as those mentioned in my positionality and autoethnographic account, or participant views which stated that everything could be resolved by simply having a good plan and following it, could lead to failure to achieve real participation.

According to Duflo (2012, p.1053), there is a strong correlation between women empowerment and economic development. Access to the rights, educational and income-earning components of development, among others, can increase the rate of development. Thus, the outputs of the Dhamar programme can be considered particularly important in Yemen. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of donors in providing financial and technical support, the longer-term outcomes have been interrupted or erased by the war which began in 2015. Nonetheless, participants' perceived importance of including grassroots members in the implementation, decision-making and evaluation of projects and activities was in agreement with the literature which states that in the long-term this ensures ownership and commitment (Craig 1998; Francis 2001; Kothari 2001).

The findings on applying participatory approach through the development programmes indicate it is valued to ensure people's voice is heard and represented. The participants confirmed that it is the key for success in their work if it is applied from the early stage of any development programme. The participatory approach for them and according to IFAD's documents is a combination of the work between all parties: government side, communities, and related stakeholders. In addition, the findings from participants also addressed the importance of involving targeted communities in the early stages of the programmes' designing in order to enable them to participate actively in the implementation process. However, they identified serious challenges and barriers to achieving the aim of this approach. For example, one

participant who worked closely with the local community shared concerns regarding women's position and cultural barriers such as early marriage and lack of time, which limited the active and continual participation of women and girls. Many scholars have raised the issue of equal participation and its impact on rural community development, positioning a participatory approach as an effective channel of development if participation is equal in terms of sharing their knowledge and having opportunities for their voice to be listened to, as well as sharing responsibilities (Mosse 2001; Mohan 2001; Cornwall 2003; Mohan 2007).

Participants all agreed the importance of development assistance in diverse ways: poverty reduction, economic growth, institutional reforms, improvement of infrastructure, provision of health and education services, and encouraging small income-generating enterprises, and technical as well as life skills training. Some scholars have proposed that such assistance may be the only means of helping marginalised communities and contributing to a kind of justice in promoting the rights of girls and women to education and full and effective participation in all sectors of the country (Corbridge 2002; Robeyns 2005; Simon 2006; Stillman and Denison 2014). Rather more modestly, Banya (1988, p. 491) asserts that development assistance has a positive impact, saying there is "*no doubt that recipient countries do gain something from aid, if only in terms of training and construction*". In this regard, as highlighted by the data presented in this thesis, I agree with the impact of this support, although my work experience in Yemen makes me add a note of caution. The assistance should always be subject to a process of transparency and effective oversight in order to ensure that this assistance goes directly to the beneficiaries and away from the centrality of the government and local authorities as quickly and efficiently as possible. In this context, beneficiaries should share equal responsibility with the funders and authorised government sector in the oversight of the implementation process.

10.3.2 Social norms in gender relations

The issue of the male-dominated society and men's power to limit girls' and women's opportunities to move forward is, in the context of Yemen, the result of a complex set of interactions. These interactions are between the tribal systems and customary law, the strong and direct influence of religious leaders on men through mosques and places of worship, the laws the government have signed up to, and the politicians and

judiciary who enact them, whether in full or selectively. In effect, religion benefits from a combination of powers: institutional, moral and discursive. Moreover, it benefits from exerting reward power, offering the promise of eternal paradise free from all the struggles of daily life in return for total obedience to the Creator, while wielding punishment power in the form of eternal damnation. These further combine with the network power of men within the community who meet and discuss things separately from women, as well as the power that individual men exercise in their own homes and as the head of the family. To many Yemenis, as to me, it is important that men in rural communities, along with religious leaders, be aware of the rights of women and girls but awareness is not enough to combat these multiple sources of power.

For example, primary education is not gender-segregated but even where a primary school is not too far away, some parents prefer not to send their girls to mixed schools. This may be because of concerns about their safety outside the house, sometimes because they cannot afford basic necessities such as shoes for all their children, sometimes they simply believe it is better for girls to stay at home and sometimes because they cannot understand the need for girls to have education they will never use. Most of these views, I am sorry to say, come from the men's ideas (which they will often say are found in the Qur'an and Sharia law) and their authority in the household. The lack of girls' schooling has a long-term effect on women's literacy rate, which in turn suppresses their capabilities and limits their choices in life. The literature stresses that it is important for governments' development plans to prioritise and find an effective mechanism for educating and developing the skills of young women (Power 2015). Power adds that this should be a matter of practice as well as theory, which is not how it works in Yemen.

It was asserted that IFAD works with the Ministry responsible for Adult Education (P2), that "education in Yemen is guaranteed to all" by the General Education Law No. (45) of 1992 and that "Girls and women are encouraged to continue their studies to higher education and to join the workforce if they want" (P2). However, the attribution of female illiteracy to socio-cultural factors by several participants avoids the fact that the participants themselves are members of that culture yet assume it is beyond their control and the control of others like them to make a difference. Early marriage is often blamed for female illiteracy but some countries may find it difficult to criticise the lack of a minimum age for marriage and have no moral power to exert. For example, in the

United States in 2016, the Tahirih Justice Center helped to make Virginia the first state to set the age for marriage as that of a legal adult; many states have no legal minimum age (Bowden 2013; www.tahirih.org).

Unlike IFAD, the Yemen Ministry of Education works with local governorate administrations and networks with religious and tribal leaders but could do more to encourage girls' education. IFAD needs to work through existing government arrangements to seek further support from the Ministry of Education, which is best placed to address the shortages of schools for girls and female teachers through its contacts with other IDOs and donor organisations in national strategic plans for education. However, discussions regarding female education run the risk of raising tensions and division between representatives of the different strands of Islam and causing further restriction of women's rights.

The size of the problem can be illustrated by a legal study that was conducted by Manea (2010) which demonstrates the extent to which women in Yemen are victims of a lack of protection in civil law as well as from males and social attitudes. Manea gives two examples:

Personal Status Law (No. 20 of 1992) and the amendments enacted through Law No. 27 of 1998 and Law No. 24 of 1999 discriminate against women in matters concerning marriage, divorce, and child custody, and treat women as inferior members of the family (Manea 2010, p. 552)

Article 40 mandates that a wife must obey her husband by deferring to his choice for their place of residence, following his orders and undertaking her domestic chores, not leaving her marriage residence without his permission, and fulfilling his sexual desires. This final provision flagrantly legitimizes sexual violence and rape within marriage (Manea 2010, p. 553)

The low position of women in rural Yemen is therefore enshrined in law, a perfect example of "explicit regulations regarding resource distribution and material goods [that] are gender specific" (Risman 2004, p. 433) and indeed extend not only to the use of women's time but also their bodies and emotions.

In addition to the traditional roles of women as mothers and carers responsible for household management, women in rural areas typically have the main responsibility for animal husbandry and crop production (Etheredge 2011; IFAD 2011a). Thus they have little time they can use as a resource for doing other things to further their own development. Social norms limit their movement; for example, there is no law against women driving and some women do drive in the cities, but in rural communities,

women are strongly discouraged from driving. In a conservative society and especially in rural areas, social norms and traditions are stronger than legal rights. Moreover, women are expected to be accompanied by a male guardian and should take permission from men in all matters small and large, which limits their freedom to live their lives with respect. This hinders women from being able to make their own decisions such as to finish their secondary education, attend university or work according to their desires and competence. This attitude is not “based on any valid law but is the customary practice of the authorities” (Manea 2010, p. 552).

The patriarchal social norms include the early marriage of girls. One of the reasons for the prevalence of early marriage is that there is no law that forbids it and the clerics exploit this with weak justification based on precedents in religious history and cultural tradition that preserve the right of men to marry young girls (Manea 2010). Typically, girls are married early to a husband chosen by their father and male relative. This is approved and indeed authorised by Shari’a law and supported by civil law. The long-term consequences of early marriage, large families and a hard physical life in agriculture, can have an adverse effect on not only women’s health, education and life but also on that of their children (Manea 2010; MOPIC 2010).

It is also important to note that one of the reasons for men’s attitude towards women and refusal to acknowledge their rights is because the vast majority of men experience traditional religious education through places of worship. Men learn about the roles of men and women from local mosques’ imams (men only) who are graduates of religious institutes which they usually join at very early age (sometimes they start going to learn Qur’an at 7 years old or earlier as in my village). Normally, in rural villages, only men attend the mosque, which is also the almost exclusive source of advice about how families should be run as well as religious teaching and prayer. It is a masculine environment in which interpretation of religious teachings allows the concept of ‘equal but different’ in the Qur’an to be distorted by emphasizing the ‘different’. In the same context, all education at all levels contains religious knowledge and instruction that contributes to boys’ deep-seated attitude towards women in the long-term. As a result, women are doubly disadvantaged because they “are largely illiterate” (IFAD 2011a, p. 6) so cannot access the classical Arabic-Qur’anic texts for themselves which makes them severely vulnerable to blind obedience to the opinions and orders of imams and male relatives.

The unobservable reality behind these considerations of partnership, participation and social norms is that of power.

10.3.3 Power and empowerment

Critically, there is the underlying reality of power which is not made explicit in the data although empowerment of rural communities, especially women and youth, was central to the project. Different scholars have examined power in different ways and I have chosen to use the typology of Moon (2019) which has been applied to global health but feels appropriate for the present research. Moon identifies eight types of power, namely: physical, economic, structural, institutional, moral, expert, discursive and network. Moon distinguishes between structural and institutional power, arguing that while institutional power relates to how procedures and rules are used in decision-making, structural power relates to the deeper aspects of how society is organised.

The government has formal structural power which means that IFAD or any IDO wishing to operate in Yemen must first and foremost have permission from the government to do so, even where the government is weak and unstable and lacks economic power. The top-down approach of IFAD seen in the COSOP and reinforced by participants' views that development programmes based on country context means that the government retains formal structural power over the projects, although this is strongly tempered by the economic power of the IDO and donors. This explains much of the government's willingness to accept, at least on the surface, notions of women empowerment and gender mainstreaming. The reduced number of women in government indicates a lack of support from men at the highest levels, so without the need for international funding it is very unlikely that anything would change. From my feminist perspective, it is to IFAD's credit that it uses its economic power to try to improve women's situation.

IFAD also possesses institutional power through its rules at various levels, for example on financial monitoring related to governance and on having field teams consisting of one man and one woman, which it uses to influence behaviour. However, other IDOs and donors also possess this power and their rules can change, as in the case of the donor who withdrew funding which affected the community development elements. Thus IDOs have two key sources of power: economic power and institutional power.

Whether IDOs choose to ignore the institutional power of organised religion (since they cannot have worked in Yemen for 40 years without recognising its impact) or assume that the need for foreign money will outweigh this is not clear because it is avoided in the data. It is, however, important as my autoethnographic account suggests. The social structure of religion, the mosques, the hierarchy of religious leaders and the Islamic schools, all possess institutional power. This is not unique to Islam but can easily be seen in other faiths, for example, in the Roman Catholic church. Religions have other sources of power too. Religious structure also benefits from having network power through the network of clerics and tribal leaders, who often support each other in order to increase the power they share. The ultimate authority from which the religious community states it draws its power, thereby not only calling on moral power but also on the power of Allah, the all-powerful. In the deeply religious and conservative of Yemen, if women could read the Qur'an themselves with help from a female Islamic scholar with whom they could discuss and ask questions, there would be more opportunity for them to influence the social context, but this is impossible within the limits of communication in the country.

The moral power exercised by community development activists is much less than that of the formal religious structures but it may be possible to continue the kind of persuasion that women can increase the family income and improve their children's health through taking part in these international programmes. In the short term this could increase pressure on rural women, but in the longer term, it could perhaps give them enough confidence through the status they would achieve as contributors to family and village life, as was seen to happen with the Queen of Oranges and the brick-maker.

IFAD, other IDOs and religious bodies can also benefit from expert power. IFAD exercises expert power in poverty reduction based on its experience in initiatives in many countries that has led others to consider the knowledge it has gained to be legitimate. It is exercised by IFAD as an organisation but also by the international and national experts it employs, and the acceptance of international experts' knowledge does not automatically extend to some field staff who would argue they are equally expert but in a different way. The response of staff in the field in the present study seemed to relate to the attitude of the expert and the way the expert responded to them.

In fact, the influence of the different types of power can vary over time and there is competition and sometimes conflict between them. The present study has shown that project leaders and staff who are in direct communication with beneficiaries can provide opportunities for participation and capacity of voice, if they are backed by the economic and institutional power of an IDO like IFAD. In doing so, they create a temporary source of network and moral power enables women empowerment, but there is no guarantee that this will continue after funding ends and the balance of power can shift again. Meanwhile, an individual consultant with expert power can also undermine that, if for example they do not highlight further development and innovation which could help to fund a further phase of development.

In similar vein, a female role model can create network power among women as well as exert influence within her own immediate circle. For example, for me, my role models were my mother and grandmother as they were the major influence motivating and inspiring me to finish my education even though I did not live with them for a long time, yet my imagination allowed me to imagine a future which I wished and allowed me to reject societal and masculine oppression. Later, in my working life I found other role models who created a network of mutual support and encouragement. Role models have been defined as “individuals who influence [children’s, adolescents’, and young adults’] achievements, motivation, and goals by acting as behavioural models, representations of the possible, and/or inspirations” (Morgenroth et al. 2015, p. 468) but in fact they can influence older adults as well, as shown by the findings of the present study. The appointment of a female project director and females on the field teams provided role models that may have positively affected achievements in the educational opportunities provided, the development of capabilities and choices of small business. The beneficiaries who went on to become literacy and life skills trainers offered potentially valuable role models to young girls, for whom the lack of role models is considered as an “another barrier to the empowerment of girls” (Shah, p. 102). The importance of the role models created through the Dhamar project cannot be overstated.

It is impossible to ignore the physical force used by the government and its many tribal and international supporters and enemies; militia and weapons proliferate and perpetuate the risk of civil unrest and war. This reinforces and is reinforced by the physical power men have over women, which is granted in marriage by law, as

discussed earlier. However, consideration of the total or partial destruction of the fabric of society caused by war and natural disasters is outside the scope of this thesis, except to record that it happens and can destroy much of the progress made towards economic empowerment and human rights.

One power which is available to almost any group or individual is the power of language, or rather discursive power, which refers to how language is used to talk about an issue. Examples have been highlighted at various points in this thesis. It is interesting that the female project director preferred talking about empowering the community, although she was clearly passionate about empowering women; 'empowering the community' includes men and all their family members, while for mothers it includes their children. 'Empowerment' is still a difficult term to use in Arabic but much of the threat has been removed. Moreover, it is not possible to empower people by force; it is about creating opportunities in an environment that allows them to take more control over their own lives, if they wish to do so. This means they need access to resources that they can convert, as discussed in section 10.6. Before going on to explore that, the next section looks at additional issues of language.

10.3.4 Lost in translation

The study has drawn attention to issues of the language of gender equality and empowerment and how this can be meaningless and/or offensive when translated into Arabic. This is partly because of the historical colonial relationship between the West and the developing world, including Yemen, and partly because the Arabic understanding of 'empowerment' is that it is the strength to deal with life's difficulties that can only be granted by Allah. Empowerment can also suggest to people in power that if other people gain power, they will lose some of the power they already have, which is a dangerous idea to try to sell. It is important that empowerment is understood as the process of giving people more control over their own lives, for example so that they can have healthier families and be better able to feed them. 'Capacity building' is a much less threatening expression. The findings regarding language confirmed that people's culture and identity are important and sensitive in an environment that has not fully complied with all the provisions of international human rights conventions. Within Middle Eastern Islamic societies there is widespread rejection of the unconditional acceptance of Western culture, especially in view of past experience of colonialism in the region, which in their view seeks to dominate and impose a new

identity in the region. It is therefore highly important that the language and the Western ideas it expresses avoid causing any unnecessary conflict during project development and humanitarian intervention, especially in the rural areas which are more bound by tradition. Some women participants were open to Western terminology as they were aware of its meaning and it served the issue of promoting women's rights, some amended it slightly to better suit the context (such as 'empowering the whole community' rather than 'empowering women'), while uneducated and illiterate women in rural areas were more likely to follow the negative influence of men's views of western culture and a hidden agenda behind gender, development and empowerment. In a traditional Islamic society like Yemen, the theory of Western intellectual invasion is widespread among the most educated of both sexes; only a small group of people considers openness to Western culture could benefit everyone by helping to make Yemen part of the world and not an isolated village.

The literature reveals differing views among Arab scholars with regard to the purpose of introducing Western terminology, involvement and culture within development interventions. Some see it simply as a new way of returning to countries they previously colonised and results in the theft from poor nations of their culture and identity as well as their natural resources, all in the name of 'development'. They believe that the ideology and agenda is that the poor stay poor - if not poorer- and the rich get richer (Qindil 2000; ElNaqib 2002; Jalbi 2011). Others identify the involvement of western countries as a useful mechanism for increasing knowledge transfer and social responsibility (Yaseen 2011).

IFAD will have to continue to use terms such as 'women empowerment' and 'gender equality' because they are written into its strategies and are lived values in the organisation as far as the context of a particular country permits. The Yemeni government will have to continue to accept the terms if it wishes to receive the funding. However, it was clear that not all male Yemeni participants in this study were fully on board with the concepts and this issue will need to be tackled. It may be that women beneficiaries who have developed the capability for voice will stand up for themselves as teachers or businesswomen, if they are given the opportunity to participate in meetings addressed by a man who holds these views and challenge the views. Their views could be fed into evaluations more effectively; if IFAD's process is to be genuinely participatory, criticism as well as success stories and lessons learned could

be included, maybe as 'areas for improvement'. This could also take account of the negative comments made about some international consultants. Critical comments should, of course, focus on the behaviour and not on the individual.

IFAD has provided social conversion factors which were uncontroversial, namely roads and drinking water supply. Roads enabled better access to schools as well as markets and indeed some schools were built or repaired. These can also be considered as resources, as can the seeds and tools it has provided for agriculture.

10.4 Resources

If individuals increase their personal conversion factors through acquiring knowledge and skills, they still need the resources to be able to develop capabilities and achieve functionings. Many rural women in Dhamar increased their personal conversion factors in terms of time, literacy, financial literacy, other life skills and a range of knowledge and skills related to agriculture. IFAD supported the creation of Savings and Credit groups as a resource but one umbrella organisation for the groups failed and IFAD had to establish and support another one which, they reported, was also quite fragile.

The lack of schools in rural areas, particularly girls' schools, referred to by participants from all groups, indicates that resources that could enhance women's capabilities had been in short supply for a long time in rural areas. Schools offer an effective channel for girls to grow into women who can make their voices heard and respected in their household; moreover, they can support girls' well-being (Ecker 2014). However, safe roads and transport are also essential for girls to attend school (MOPIC 2010). The problem is not confined to Yemen; it is notable that, "school transport in rural areas has been generally mistreated or even ignored by both education and transportation planners." (Vasconcellos 1997, p.127). The scarcity of schools, female teachers and school principals, and safe travel all influence the decision of families to determine the importance of education, which in turn gives them a good excuse to decide who is sent to study, and the most likely decision is to send boys rather than girls to school (MOE 2015).

IFAD and other IDOs are able to improve the availability of some resources, although the improvement is likely to be temporary, in view of the political and economic instability which characterizes Yemen. The state's financial resources have been

depleted in political conflicts and civil wars, leading to failure to provide basic services to its people while continuing to provide resources to the military (Ateeq 2013). When development projects are suspended and replaced by humanitarian relief, this leads to a further collapse of public services such as education and health and a rise in unemployment and infections as well as illiteracy (Al-Batuly et al. 2012).

In addition, the availability of natural resources is quite poor. Yemen is one of the most water-stressed countries in the world (IFAD 2011b, p. 1) and agricultural activities use over 90% of the available water resources (Almas and Scholz, p. 72). Oil reserves are rapidly declining (New Agriculturalist 2010) and, due to the political and economic turmoil, potentially promising areas such as fishing and small deposits of precious metals are not being developed.

In summary, the social context, public conversion factors and resources identified in the documentary analysis and participant perspectives are not supportive of, or conducive to, the empowerment of women. They restrict rather than encourage any extension of capabilities or range of choice. Moreover, Arabic translations of the Western concepts of empowerment and equality can give offence by seeming to contradict the teachings of the Qur'an and can actively work against projects and activities for women's development. Thus, in capability approach terms, the systems and processes are lacking essential elements at the country and organisation levels. Social conversion factors are negatively affected by country resources, something which impacts group decision making at the highest levels, for example in prioritising what programmes and activities to finance.

10.5 Social influences on decision making

Against this backdrop, the social influences on decision making are complex. In the multi-layered reality of the Participatory Rural Development Project, different patterns of social influences were at work on the various groups and individual participants involved. The most relevant groups according to the country context and collected data were: government officials, employing organisations, religious leaders, men (as a group within a local community) and family. Each of these is discussed in turn.

First, on the issue of government officials, in Yemeni society, political instability, power struggles and the emergence of radical religious authority exploit the absence of the

rule of law to impose generally blind adherence by government officials to whatever the priority or opinion is at the time. The country needs international financial support so officials, following Ministers, accept ideas such as women empowerment at a superficial level for the purposes of development. Some participants try to maintain contradictory ideas. The study participants identified the role of government officials in relation to their personal interest in supporting or resisting the development programmes aiming to support women. However, they support the idea of funding conditions which allow the funders to agree to provide the funding if the government agrees to the inclusion of women as beneficiaries and staff in their programmes. Some female participants welcomed the power of IDOs, the UN and the World Bank who could push the government towards adopting women's issues within their agendas. Five participants specifically mentioned corruption as an issue, although one partly excused this on the basis that government salaries were too low. Corruption can affect and distort decision-making, putting pressure on individuals through bribery, threats or a mixture of both.

Turning to the employing organisations, participants' views indicated that IDOs are more driven by outputs, while NGOs are more driven by process and grassroots development, although all are affected by political and religious leaders in the target country. IFAD is strongly influenced by the United Nations and donor countries and by the World Bank, which is one of the main development players at the strategic level in Yemen. In contrast, the strongest influence on NGOs is probably the grassroots community they serve, although they typically depend on payments for their involvement in project delivery from IFAD or another IDO. This can lead to tensions between individuals in different employing organisations, such as the perceptions of what the role of an international consultant should be when interacting with grassroots NGO staff.

The main influence within the country is that of the religious leaders, which in turn influences men as a group within the community and how they act in their family units, a key aspect of the unobservable reality. The culture, led by men, considers that a departure from obedience to a man is a departure from obedience to God, as they have been told by their imams. Many rural women accept this because to disobey may bring shame upon them from other family members and their village. This negatively affects their self-esteem and so there may be an uncomfortable trade-off

for some women between following their own preferred path but losing self-esteem and following the path chosen for them but retaining the respect of their families and community.

10.6 Blame the culture

Some participants were happy to explain the way things were in terms of the culture, as if this was something that could not be changed. Some acknowledged that perhaps it could be different in villages where people knew each other, but by implication that it could not work on a wider scale. Some conceded that women should be helped to improve their economic status and education would help them to do that, but did not address the deeper gender inequalities. Sadly, Yemeni nationals who say the culture is responsible are denying the fact that they are part of that culture; they recreate it on a daily basis. Female participants were more positive that the culture could change, at least having men and women able to work together on some issues that were important to their village community.

Individuals need to be helped to understand that they, not God, are responsible for the culture which prevails. The constant turmoil in Yemen is the product of men, politics and power; it is not sent by God. Individuals may benefit from hearing stories of how culture in Yemen has been changed in small ways for everyone's benefit while keeping to Islamic teachings, as in the example I have just given and the other examples of women helping their families through earning income and helping their children as well as earning respect for themselves in their local community.

10.7 Extension of capabilities

The findings raise an important issue about capabilities in terms of skills and opportunities. They indicate that there are severe limitations on any extension of capabilities, on the creation and sustainability of opportunities, and on the freedom to choose between them, in terms of social context, resources and social influences on decision-making.

The demand for, and success of, literacy activities for some 16,000 women is unlikely to lead to further expansion of capability except in the important but limited sphere of texts related to agricultural information, unless there is additional support from an education-oriented IDO. There are three reasons for this: adult women may need

interesting reading material, they may need light to read by as well as to read with their children in the evenings, and they may exercise their agency to do something else which they value more highly if the reading materials are not interesting enough. Those rural women who have been given a 'fishing line' of literacy rather than been given 'a fish' by reading to them may have little or no opportunity to use their skills after the project ends. They will have no fish, or pond containing fish, given to them.

Similarly, some 30,000 women gained skills and knowledge through agriculture-related training, with around the same number accessing income-generating opportunities. Women were running Savings and Credit groups and accessing finance for the first time. Women represented 10% of participants in a field day, which is significant in the Yemeni context of gender bias towards men. The percentages of women participating in planning through community development groups dropped dramatically at the level of district co-ordination, because of travel restrictions imposed on women. This indicates that at higher levels of planning and decision-making women have fewer opportunities for participation than men.

Where women achieved a higher than expected proportion of an outputs, as they did in the target for Village Animal Health Extension Worker, the proposal was that a higher target should have been set for women. This suggests that the participatory planning efforts at the mid-term review did not involve women in this decision because, like the literacy target, it could have been changed. Thus, even within the project, their opportunities for representation could have been increased, and in general it is said that women's representation in economic and political decision-making processes is vital for achieving functionings. This is in agreement with relevant literature in relation to the availability of real opportunities and their role in extending or limiting individual choice (Nussbaum and Sen 1992; Robeyns 2005; Nussbaum 2006). Whether or not an individual takes up an opportunity they are offered depends on their personal context and individual conversion factors as well as how they choose to exercise their agency.

10.8 Exercising agency

Unfortunately for some beneficiaries and for some local development consultants, there may be individuals further up the organisation who have expert power and can exercise their agency much more freely than others who they perceive to be in a less

important position. For many rural women they need to feel they have sense of ownership in their own life and the life of their community; local community development specialists are very supportive of this, in contrast to many international consultants used by IDOs who have a 'one size fits all' approach that most of IDOs' international consultants use (Flint and Natrup 2014, 2019).

Depending on the specific nature of formal or informal education that is offered, education can help to expand the real freedoms that people value and is considered essential to the process (UNESCO 2002, p. 32-33). The female participants in the present research held high level qualifications and some held leadership positions in their organisations. Their education as well as their position enabled them to exercise their agency and to choose to help other disadvantaged women. In my autoethnographic account, I shared my experience of formal and informal education which helped to widen my horizons in life. Living in Yemen, it became my only gateway to a different future that I believed I deserved, unlike my sisters and many female cousins who were oppressed by the attitudes of the patriarchal society.

The majority of women in rural communities will not have had the life experience to enable them to exercise agency in the sense of freedom of choice. They may have had only one option, to follow the traditional path set out for them, or some may have seen other possibilities but exercise their agency in choosing a quiet life. However, some IFAD participants clearly believed that the situation could be changed if women shared the lead and were visible on the development frontline.

Despite the enormity of the challenges, through the Dhamar project and specifically through the project director, IFAD did make it possible for rural women to access the opportunities provided and increase their individual conversion factors. Women beneficiaries were reported to have specifically taken advantage of the learning opportunities on offer using their existing individual conversion factors, namely skills in management of home and children as well as animal husbandry and agriculture that were previously widely unrecognised.

Thus, within the opportunities afforded to them by the project, they exercised their agency which, in rural communities in Yemen, is severely constrained by the issues discussed in this chapter.

In terms of the numbers of rural women who achieved functionings they had reason to value, according to participant responses as well as IFAD documents, the time and effort they gave to some of the opportunities clearly indicates they valued the functioning, whether or not it earned them money, otherwise they would not have given up their time to do it. Moreover, some women who undertook the Train the Trainers course then went on to teach and train women in their homes if that was the only option; that implies a choice outside the original boundaries of the project, an opportunity which the trainers valued in terms of helping other women.

Notwithstanding, Sen (1993, 1999) recognised that being able to exercise agency and achieve valued functioning in this way typically requires overcoming many obstacles to effective participation, such as cultural norms, power relations and public policies. On a small scale, the Dhamar programme can be considered a success in extending rural women's capabilities, but in the longer term, the obstacles remain. Societal change is still painfully slow and women need the support of their families if they are to succeed in the longer term and at a higher level.

The female participants were the exceptions as they held higher education and leadership positions and lived independently. The Yemeni national female participants held higher educational degrees from Western and Arab universities were working in a respected and senior positions in the public and private sectors. Manea (2010, p. 558) observed that women from upper-middle or upper-class backgrounds were more likely to break free from traditional social constraints and that there was no guarantee of equal opportunity among women.

10.9 Agency, structure and domination

There is even more to the difficulty of exercising agency than the patriarchal social norms and the obvious power relationships discussed in section 10.6. Some men will justify the restrictions imposed on women using whatever excuse or authority comes to hand. such as their position in an organisation, their authority as a man (either culturally or religiously determined), or their personal authority as head of household. However, it is important to note that some women may also oppress other women in a similar way. I am thinking in particular of the unfavourable experiences of some international consultants reported by some participants and of my own job interview. Where men or women have higher social positions by reason of assets, birth or associations (social positions), combined with their organisational position, including

within their family unit (social roles) and perceive themselves or are perceived as conforming more closely to cultural norms (social identity), they are well placed to exert power over others who lack these attributes. IFAD's acceptance of the existing patriarchal culture was welcomed by some Yemeni participants as understanding the culture, by which they probably meant accepting it. In this context, it is vital to have a project manager who is suitably qualified and experienced and is genuinely supportive of women less well-placed. Ideally, because of the importance of role models, this would be a woman who also recognises the need to bring men on board with any initiatives that could change or challenge the social structure of gender.

As Mader (2016, p.434) pointed out, thinking about gender as a structure can assist in identifying where and how gender issues need to be addressed at different levels. For example, in the Dhamar project, interactions with individual women did provide role models and make a difference. The photographs of men and women working together (Appendix D) indicate that male development workers were interacting in a similar way with male beneficiaries. However, where women and village communities were in effect challenging the village social structure, it would have been helpful to have the imam, perhaps supported by the authority of an Islamic scholar, who could refer to religious texts to support the developments and thus help to reduce the barriers at this level.

In similar vein, when IFAD has the opportunity to deal with gendered institutions, notably the government but also donors, the organisation needs to find various means of persuading 'gatekeepers' that change is appropriate, using whichever economic, financial, religious or moral arguments are likely to work. Otherwise, all the burden of trying to bring about change rests on the female beneficiaries, who will repeatedly find themselves in what Mader terms action-situations that are symbolically framed by people who have power over them (2016, p.446). If a woman as agent cannot easily avoid the power of another agent who can apply sanctions or withhold resources, she will be dominated and restricted in her agency (Mader 2016, p. 446). Thus the gender structure needs to be addressed on the various levels in order for women to be able to use their personal conversion factors and exercise their agency in making non-traditional choices if they wish to do so.

10.10 Conclusion

The key findings and issues from the data analysis have been discussed in this chapter, including findings regarding the unobservable 'real' reality of critical realism. For this reason, issues of power and blaming the culture have been discussed in addition to the more directly observable dimensions of reality.

There is an overall sense that IFAD was able to expand the capabilities of many rural women who were beneficiaries of the Dhamar programme but that freedom of choice and the exercise of agency remained limited by a lack of resources in addition to the prevailing gender structure and elements of the culture such as dress. There remains a concern that the burden of continuing change rests on the women beneficiaries who have gained skills and knowledge but have also gained additional responsibilities towards their families and communities and are left to continue the struggle without support at other levels in the social structure. The discussion of partnership, participation and power indicated that there was scope for IFAD to improve its working relationships with some of its partners and contacts, and to influence others to improve theirs, in order to begin to provide greater support for women beneficiaries.

The language used by donors and IDOs could sometimes result in significant misunderstandings and it was suggested that discussions around terms and perhaps use of alternative expressions could help to close the gap. It was also suggested that IFAD should use its links with the Ministries of Education and Adult Literacy to engage more imams and village leaders in conversations about women's rights.

IFAD and other IDOs do use their power to influence women's issues in Yemen and other countries. They are able to do so because Yemen is one of the most fragile states, desperately in need of financial assistance for both development and humanitarian relief. This may offer opportunities for IFAD to exert stronger influence. In practice, IFAD's efforts have been badly disrupted at times by civil unrest and war but discussion of the impact of these events is beyond the scope of this thesis.

In the final chapter, the research objectives are addressed, and recommendations are made. I reflect on the use of the capability approach as a framework for analysis and describe the limitations of the study. I suggest possibilities for further research before concluding the thesis with an overall summary of the work.

Chapter 11 Conclusions and recommendations

Following the discussion of key findings in the previous chapter, the thesis concludes with a summary of the main research outcomes. The chapter begins by demonstrating how I addressed the research objectives and questions, then offers recommendations and a reflection on the research process, in particular the use of the capability approach as a framework for analysis, before describing the limitations of the study. The thesis concludes with the contribution to knowledge, suggestions for further research, and an overall summary of the work.

11.1 Addressing the research objectives and questions

11.1.1 First research objective

The first objective was to *explore the reasons why IFAD and other International Development Organisations choose to intervene in Yemen*. This was addressed through the context chapter (sections 2.9 to 2.11) and the literature review (3.3 to 3.5) as well as through the reasons stated by participants in the interviews. Participants were asked about reasons to see if there were any differences between their reasons and those given in the literature in order to understand if and why reasons differed, and also to identify any possible differences between participants from varied backgrounds.

As shown in the data from the interviews and the IFAD policy documents, the main reasons for interventions in Yemen are essentially economic development and improvements in security and peace, together with humanitarian aid in times of crisis. More specific reasons include the reduction of poverty (which is IFAD's remit in the agriculture sector), the improvement of governance, greater observance of human rights, and an increase in economic conditions and trade, as a road towards greater stability and peace and a reduction in terrorism. It may be that developed nations are fulfilling their responsibilities as one participant suggested, but it may also be that there is considerable self-interest in having a more stable world.

IFAD was created as a major initiative of the World Food Conference in 1974 with the specific mandate of all aspects of agricultural improvement in the poorest rural communities. Its approach to gender equality and women empowerment is in line with

its mandate, because in many of the poorest rural communities in Yemen and elsewhere, women do most of the agricultural work.

Other organisations have been created or intervened in response to specific problems, such as those related to the achievement of MDGs. However, the problems are often interrelated. For example, in the case of IFAD, agricultural improvement has required considerable investment in roads in order to transport products to markets beyond immediately neighbouring villages. Improved products and productivity require improved transport. They also require farmers' co-operatives and groups for women agricultural workers who can negotiate at larger markets. This involves targeted training and adult education, which in turn requires time. Thus initiatives such as more local supplies of drinking water save time, information about health can save time caring for sick children just as information about animal health can save animals and increase the prices healthy animals achieve at market. Women's rights and access to finance are also essential to enabling women agricultural workers to make the most of their limited opportunities for themselves as well as their families. The first step is to enable their voices to be expressed and heard, leading to community development initiatives. In a country like Yemen, even when the mandate appears to be fairly straightforward, it is not.

11.1.2 Second research objective

The second objective, *to understand the development processes employed by IFAD*, and the corresponding research question, was addressed through the examination of IFAD policy documents (especially sections 7.3.1, 7.3.1, Figure 7.2 and section 8.3.1.4 of the analysis) in addition to participant contributions. Participants were asked questions to elicit responses to the research question, *How are IFAD's processes for developing education and other initiatives perceived to involve women in rural communities in Yemen?* Participants who were more closely involved in the actual processes rather than in their design were asked additional questions about their experience and perceptions of the processes.

IFAD policy is to have a specific component for women in every programme. According to the participants, there is a policy which stipulates that 50% of beneficiaries of IFAD projects should be women. However, it is not easy to guarantee the achievement of this 50% target because there are some beneficiaries who

withdraw because of the social restrictions such as cultural barriers and early marriages.

During the project design and planning stages, as participant interviews and IFAD documents indicated, women were not fully involved because there were no community groups where they could express their views, as acknowledged in IFAD documents.

It was necessary, at the start of the implementation stage, to create groups and associations where the women could express opinions and ideas, then encourage them to join, in order to enable capacity of voice for a few thousand women. Whilst IFAD documents reported that meetings of village units and development committees later in the project had a good proportion of women, female membership of district level planning committees was only 8%, indicating women's input at the level of decision-making was relatively low.

Uptake of literacy and numeracy classes was more than double the original target and a second, higher level course, as well as additional classes, was provided at the request of women beneficiaries, indicating IFAD's willingness to be responsive to their needs. Participation among 15-24 year olds was more than 50% of the total, indicating this was something many women, particular younger women, chose to get involved in. Women beneficiaries, according to interviewees, were asked to nominate women who they would trust to be good teachers; most of these women had only completed elementary school, so IFAD organised professional training for them. Moreover, a few young women who had completed secondary education, and whose family supported them, were given scholarships for higher education in a subject useful to the project. IFAD's development and education initiatives were successful in involving women, within the limits of available project funding and time.

However, while the implementation was participatory, according to the documentary analysis, the original setting of targets and activities was not. The interviews revealed that from the standpoint of local and national consultants the process was not necessarily participatory in areas such as target-setting and project evaluation, thus 'participatory' referred only to beneficiary participation in specific aspects of the process. Nonetheless, this represented a considerable advance for IFAD's rural development programmes in Yemen. Indeed, IFAD development and educational

programmes worked so well in one village that that, after a year, women and men worked together in the same place, even in the same room, discussing things together. This was almost unbelievable in the deeply conservative context of a rural Yemeni village.

The selection of a female director, and the refusal of IFAD to back down and appoint a man, was especially important in enabling many rural women to become as involved as they did.

11.1.3 Third research objective

The third objective was to *explore the effectiveness of the programmes, policies and education activities in relation to developing the capabilities of women in rural communities in Yemen*. The corresponding research question was framed as, *How effective are programmes, policies and education activities perceived to be in terms of developing the capabilities of women in rural communities in the Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Programme?*

The Dhamar project was starting from a very low base in terms of women's involvement in development and education initiatives. The literacy rate for women was just 12%, due to a shortage of schools and teachers for girls, issues of safety in addition to poverty, early marriage, and a belief that education was not as necessary for girls as it was for boys. Women typically spent up to 15 hours a day on household chores, childcare and agricultural tasks, including walking for several hours to collect water. It was very rare for them to be allowed to keep any cash they earned; it went straight to the male head of the household, unless the woman was the head of the household. Women were not allowed to travel outside their village unless accompanied by their husband, father or another male family member.

In order for IFAD to achieve its principal aim of poverty reduction by improving agricultural productivity and enabling people to sell their produce in a more business-like way, there had to be opportunities for both men and women to gain relevant knowledge and skills. Male interviewees tended to point out that literacy and numeracy were necessary for business and that life skills such as information about health could help women to help their children. As IFAD documentation and some female participants pointed out, classes in life skills, literacy and numeracy were open to men and women but were empowering for women.

A variety of opportunities were offered, women getting involved in all of them to a greater or lesser extent. For example, IFAD documents reported that almost twice as many women as men trained as Village Animal Health Extension Workers. Seventy women started their own micro-businesses, a very small number compared with the total female population of the governate but a major advance in view of the cultural norms. Moreover, Saving and Credit Groups, which were set up to give women access to at least some finance, attracted more than 6,700 women members in more than 240 groups. Being able to have your voice listened to, and being able to access finance, almost certainly for the first time, will have not only encouraged participation, but offered real expansion of capability to some women, perhaps for the first time in their lives.

The positive involvement of women in all the activities offered to them was largely attributed by study participants to having women working alongside men to mobilise and engage the community. This provided role models for rural women who wished to take advantage of the opportunities offered. The appointment of a female director provided a visible role model for beneficiaries and female field staff alike.

However, it was noted that the inclusion of women in development work and an emphasis on gender equality were accepted from a developmental point of view, indicating that they were not necessarily accepted more widely. It may be that they were only accepted so that Yemen could receive the money. There remains a real risk that without further money, the gains in capability made by some women may be lost because resources are needed for conversion using their newly-acquired personal conversion factors (skills and knowledge).

11.1.4 Fourth research objective

The fourth objective was to *ascertain the challenges and barriers faced by IFAD in seeking to ensure women's participation during the development project process*, reflected in the research question, *What challenges or barriers are considered to be faced by IFAD in seeking to ensure women's participation during the development project process?* This was addressed throughout the study, in the context chapter, the literature review and the analysis of all sources of data. I also believe the sense of what those barriers feel like for a Yemeni woman was brought vividly to life in my own story (Chapter 6).

As reflected in interviews and analyses, IFAD faces challenges and barriers associated with the extent to which programmes that involve women as beneficiaries lead to full participation and develop their capability. At the international level, there is the challenge of attracting and retaining donors who are willing to pay for the community development and participatory aspects of the process because these are more labour-intensive and therefore costly than simply filling a classroom with enough women to meet a lower target. Then IFAD has to try to ensure that those donors will remain committed to making the payments. A further challenge is to persuade donors when necessary to recommend an international consultant who is acceptable to the community they are working in and to ensure that the consultant has the experience and communication skills to advise at the local level, and also that he or she completes their work on time and does not leave it for local consultants to do.

At the country level, there is the challenge of ensuring that gender balance is maintained in setting goals and outputs, especially when the focus of the follow-on programme concerns youth and women rather than women only. IFAD met the challenge of finding enough women to provide teams of two in the field so that women could be reached and encouraged more easily. This may be more difficult to achieve at times of increasing insecurity, when it may become less safe for female field staff - and so male nationals could have more influence on how such projects unfold and could revert to more traditional attitudes.

There is the challenge of engaging with religious and tribal leaders, something which is mainly done by national and local government staff. However, the national government does not try to overrule the religious leaders, for example on the subject of free compulsory education for all according to the law. This is just one example of where IFAD needs to work with other international donors and IDOs.

The agreement not to work in the same governates or have overlapping programmes can cause problems at the grassroots level. The challenge is to build on existing co-ordination arrangements among donors. For example, in a different area, Save the Children provided solar lamps to enable children to have more time do their homework and in a less damaging and less costly environment than using kerosene fuel; IFAD were able to take this on in a different governate from Dhamar by working with different partner organisations. IFAD gives 16,000 women the ability to read and help their children but they cannot help their children or read in the evenings without using

polluting and expensive kerosene. Some of the participants mentioned synergy, but this is not synergy. A barrier associated with this kind of high-level planning is that donors typically want to see innovation in their projects, which means that previous gains can be lost in the search for innovation. Upscaling programmes and projects is accepted based on previous success but every new call for funding and proposal is expected to contain not only innovation but an exit strategy. In a country like Yemen, both innovation and an exit strategy may be unrealistic expectations. IFAD's challenge is to try to change hearts and minds, with the support of very senior people on the boards of IDOs and donor organisations. However, the risk of continuing to support successful initiatives into a second or third phase is that the country becomes more and more dependent on funding from outside.

At national level, IFAD experiences barriers in taking gender equality and women empowerment any further. Traditional attitudes and customs can be reinforced by using language which gives offence or lacks meaning. IFAD and other IDOs have a choice: to continue to use existing, relatively literal translations, or to use language which gives a clearer explanation which makes better sense to Arabic speakers. The real but unobservable barrier lies with the religious leaders who choose to interpret religious texts in a particular way. The barrier is a stubborn one, because even if the principle of equality in education is accepted, there is not enough money to build enough schools or incentivise and pay enough female teachers for all children to attend school.

There are also the economic and political barriers that arise as a result of financial crises or civil unrest or war. These are not only barriers at the time of the turmoil but have lasting effects that can undo the positive impact of development programmes. IFAD can do nothing about these barriers other than wait until the situation improves, but the organisation has been with Yemen for more than forty years and remains consistent in its commitment to helping to reduce poverty in the country.

During the process of implementation, IFAD faces challenges at times in making sure that all parties involved in delivery, such as the local administration and organisations who hold contracts, are fully committed to the involvement of women. They may need more direct contact, training or other meetings to encourage them to remain committed.

Some participants also highlighted challenges of bureaucracy which caused late payments and delays to some elements of the programme. A few raised the issue of corruption and, although few problems were found in Dhamar, there remained the challenge to have expenditure fully accounted for at the level of local administration which is always important to donors.

11.1.5 Fifth research objective

The fifth objective was to *identify areas for improving IFAD education policies and practices for women* which was framed as the research question, *What further strategies could be adopted to enhance the participation of women in educational activities within the targeted communities and expand their capabilities?* This objective was addressed through a broad question to participants regarding how they thought the challenges, or problems or difficulties in project implementation could be addressed, with supplementary questions asked as appropriate. Data analysis based on a capability approach identified further possibilities.

It must be acknowledged that the Dhamar project was the first to use a participatory rural development approach in Yemen and the first experience of such an initiative for many of the women beneficiaries. Measured against the standards set for evaluation of the participatory aspect of project, the outcome was a great success. It was recognised that beneficiaries were not involved in the original project design but, with the experience they had gained, could be involved from the beginning in a future project. The project evaluation document also acknowledged that more animal health training opportunities should have been offered to women because they typically have the prime responsibility for the animals.

Participants also identified the major political and economic challenges facing the country, together with problems of bureaucracy, inadequately trained and experienced staff in the national and local administrations and, potentially, an element of corruption.

From a capability approach perspective and through a feminist lens, there are other strategies, which IFAD could consider adopting to enhance the participation of women in educational activities. These take the form of recommendations.

11.2 Recommendations

Viewed through a capability approach and feminist lens, the recommendations for enhancing the involvement of women in development and education initiatives in rural communities are unavoidably linked with considerations of the future. Many women beneficiaries have gained additional personal conversion factors which they cannot convert into achieved functionings without resources and unless some of the constraints associated with the gender structure in Yemen are eased. Giving people a fishing line is better than giving them fish, but they have to have fish to catch. At the end of an intervention, or series of interventions, beneficiaries need to be left with the abilities and opportunities to find and catch their own fish. For rural women in Yemen, this means they need over time to gain greater control over resources and decisions that affect the distribution of those resources. The stop-start nature of projects with defined outputs and financial end points does not encourage sustainable development, even though IDOs assert they do not wish to be intervening indefinitely. IDOs working in partnership with different players and extending participation are therefore essential at different levels within the process in order for women to maintain progress.

1. **Recommendation 1.** Accordingly, the first recommendation is to work more closely with and through local Ministry of Education and Adult Education staff to influence their thinking about the benefits that rural development programmes and education can bring to communities. Individuals in the local administration who support the education of their own wives and daughters, for whatever reason, may be able to strengthen links with religious leaders at village and district level. Over time, it may be possible to find messages in the Qur'an which support their view and to encourage such individuals to discuss these with other religious leaders and their communities. As one example, it is stated in the Qur'an that it is the duty of every Muslim to read and to educate themselves and that both men and women need to ensure that they and all their children have the opportunity to do so.
2. **Recommendation 2.** The second recommendation also relates to working with and through others. This is needed to address the ongoing challenges of ensuring that all parties involved in delivery (local administration and organisations who hold contracts), are fully committed to the involvement of

women, bureaucracy and financial management through complete and accurate recording. This requires more than further training and supervision; rather, continuing to work alongside people as partners (supporting them on the job) and keeping in touch with them less formally. Of course, the additional work would attract a cost, although a relatively small cost, but IFAD could also discuss with other IDOs how this could fit into their projects such as those on governance.

3. **Recommendation 3.** A third recommendation would be to enlist the help of the World Bank to finance further work with other IDOs, depending on political sensitivities. Again depending on political sensitivities, involvement of the Islamic Development Bank could create a useful ally, because the bank has a fund supporting women entrepreneurs in areas such as information technology and seeks to achieve the sustainable development of education among other goals. Whatever the politics, this will not be a straightforward process because every new call for funding and proposal is expected to contain not only innovation but an exit strategy as well as ensuring 'value for money'. IDOs have their own mandates and priorities and opportunities will need to be looked for on a regular basis.

It is unlikely that the situation in Yemen will be sufficiently stable in the foreseeable future to build enough girls' schools or find enough teachers in the rural areas where they are needed. The next two recommendations therefore aim to maintain some of the momentum of women's empowerment through informal education.

4. **Recommendation 4.** A positive early strategy could be to employ part-time the women who were trained as literacy teachers to provide teaching for girls who did not or could not enrol in primary school and for groups of young girls who were married early. IFAD would need to find suitable organisations among its existing IDO or Yemeni NGO partners to take this forward to pay for teaching and materials but it would send a message that there are opportunities beyond the voluntary teaching of others.
5. **Recommendation 5.** A less expensive strategy which could be easier to implement could be for female national consultants to use their own experience and their networks to source stories of rural women's success, in Yemen initially and from educated women working in NGOs in other Arabic-speaking

countries as well as the educated female Yemeni diaspora. Potentially many women could each contribute a short success story. These stories could be sent in short texts, like a serial, in the same way that agriculture-related texts were sent out by IFAD. Some could also be broadcast over the radio, but women will not maintain their reading if they have nothing to read. The classical Arabic language of the Qur'an means that although they can pronounce the words correctly and will greatly value doing so, they will remain almost wholly reliant on men to explain much of the text. Maintaining their own learning as well as up to date agricultural knowledge through reading will encourage their children, especially their daughters. However, I am aware that these last two recommendations are only my own thoughts.

6. **Recommendation 6.** The final and most important recommendation is for women beneficiaries of the Dhamar project to say what they would value in terms of further educational activities (what they would like to do or have opportunities to do) and for these to be actioned. These could be referred on by IFAD to the Yemen government, other IDOs or NGOs as appropriate.

11.3 Reflections on the research process

I have learned an enormous amount through the various stages of the research process, and I realise that a researcher never stops learning. A major lesson was that it is vital to plan every stage but that it is equally important to be flexible with planning to be able to respond to a changing situation. This not only applied to the fieldwork which was severely disrupted by the changing political environment in Yemen but to the very early redesign of the interview questions into a more flexible interview guide which was more appropriate to the varied backgrounds and experience of the people I interviewed. This made the conversations flow more naturally as well as allowing me to explore points of interest that emerged.

I found learning about autoethnography and including my own story as a data source was a great help in separating my personal experience and emotions from the other data, and this led me to use a different analysis process for each type of data. I had also been searching for a conceptual framework that would help me structure the analysis and findings; it took me a long time to find that a capability approach could work well. The way in which a capability approach distinguished between social and personal conversion factors also set me searching for an epistemology and ontology

that captured the distinction between them that I had felt myself and could see in the Dhamar project.

If and when I carry out research in the future, I will also spend time in the design stage to set aims, objectives and questions more clearly because it is then easier to develop the interview guide. I have learned a great deal, although I wish I could have learned more at an earlier stage.

11.4 Limitations of the research

Some limitations of the research apply to the majority of case studies: the lack of generalisability of findings due to purposive sampling, a relatively small sample size and the highly specific context and subject of the study. One obvious limitation is that women beneficiaries were not interviewed. However, although it would have been interesting to know their perceptions, there was a sufficient spread of views on the policies and processes involved in the design and implementation of educational activities from the sixteen participants from IFAD, others involved in international development programmes and the national administration. A larger sample of participants would give greater credibility to the findings, which were, however, supported by the analysis of policy documents and the autoethnographic contribution.

The aim of this study, like most case studies, was to closely examine and illuminate a specific case, and so it can be justifiably criticised for a lack of generalisability. However, its insights into the educational and life opportunities provided for rural women through development projects may apply to a greater or lesser extent in similar projects in other countries.

Rather than attempting to hide or eliminate researcher bias, I have made space for my lived experience in Yemen as well as my positionality as a researcher and readers can judge for themselves the differences between three sources of data and their analysis.

Differences in the findings suggest a certain distance was maintained when analysing policy documents and participant data. Findings which overlap or interconnect help to confirm the validity of the research.

11.5 Contribution to knowledge

This study makes a contribution to new knowledge in four areas:

1. This study is one of the first, certainly in the context of Yemen, to provide insight into both the benefits and limitations of educational activities within a rural development programme for women in poor rural communities. It has shown the enthusiasm for literacy, life skills and gaining skills and knowledge that assist them in their daily lives. It has shown that some women have grasped various opportunities to do and be what they value, whilst questioning whether they can continue to progress in the face of constraints within the social context and restricted access to resources. It invites us to reflect on the purposes of such education; participants mentioned community empowerment, women empowerment and saving farmers from extinction.

2. The meaning of participatory development and partnership working has been explored in a way that challenges received notions. Participation of women beneficiaries was excellent, with the acknowledgement that ideally they should be involved much more fully in the project design stage; communities were involved in design of the follow-on rural development programme. However, it was not sufficiently recognised that everyone involved in the whole process was participating in the same way and project staff need to ensure that delivery organisations and international consultants also see themselves as participants. Participation is not a synonym for beneficiaries. A similar light was shed on the concept of partnership, where not all donor or national and local administration partners were fully on board with what was delivered.

3. The choice of critical realism and a capability approach contributes to research methods in educational research. This study has shown how a capability approach can be applied to educational activities in international development projects and, in doing so, shed light on what is required to maintain or enhance the effects of those interventions in longer term.

4. The use of autoethnography together with documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews has provided real insights from different perspectives and has, I believe, greatly enriched the data. The autoethnographic account offers novel insight and depth into the experience of being a Yemeni woman whose experiences range from living the culture as a child to working as a women development consultant for an international charity in the country. Autoethnography used in this way has the potential to deepen the reader's understanding of the researcher's positionality and

this suggests it could be more widely used to help a researcher clarify their insider-outsider position where appropriate.

11.6 Future work

The adoption of a capability approach, which has mainly been used in studies related to learners with disabilities, together with critical realism as a research paradigm, suggests that this combination could be used more widely in the field of education to promote consideration of what happens next for specific groups of learners and the barriers to their achieving valued functionings.

In terms of the present study, it would be interesting to return to Yemen, after the situation is more settled, and to capture the views and perceptions of some of the women beneficiaries regarding not only their remembered perceptions of the project but how they feel about it after an interruption in development programmes.

11.7 Conclusion

The study has explored the extent to which the development policies and programmes of one IDO were perceived by those involved in their design and implementation to meet the educational needs of women in rural communities in Yemen and develop their capability. It has examined their perceptions, supported by documentary analysis and an autoethnographic contribution, through the lenses of a capability approach and feminist thought. The findings have shed light on the additional personal conversion factors such as literacy, life skills and animal health care that women have gained and on the new capabilities extended to them in terms of small businesses, Savings and Credit Groups and, for some, part-time employment in agriculture-related work or as literacy teachers. The obstacles and barriers to maintaining and extending progress have been identified mainly in terms of the social context and influences on group decision-making, which affected how development organisations worked together and how they sidestepped some of the difficulties associated with a strongly conservative and patriarchal culture.

Attention was drawn to the concepts of partnership and participation, indicating that they were relatively narrowly defined in practice and that even greater benefits could accrue to women if the behaviours of all parties involved a spirit of participation and partnership throughout the process. It was noted that the Western terminology of 'empowerment' could create resistance or give offence in a country culture which

attributed the grant of empowerment to Allah alone, whilst some expressions such as 'gender mainstreaming' carried no meaning in Arabic and made little sense socially or culturally when the English term was used and understood. The ideas of equal numbers of women and men, and of developing the whole community, were less contentious, offering a better match with religious values and cultural customs.

Much work remains to be done in order for the rural women in this study to be able to capitalize on what they have gained. Sensitive discussions should be held with approachable individuals in partner organisations to find an appropriate argument for further supporting women, whether linked to religious reasons or the future of children and the importance of family. IDO staff are uniquely placed to have these discussions provided they have the appropriate skills. Most importantly, excellent work by projects such as the Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Project should not be undermined by a technocratic approach to project design and delivery. Rather, donors should take on board the need to provide sufficient support, in terms of resources and time, for continued development, including assisting communities to enable growth of individual capabilities and achieved functionings in a way that is consistent with their cultural and religious values.

The data and findings remain relevant despite the changes in Yemen since their collection. More than six years of conflict have led to a further weakening of the state, destruction of vital infrastructure including schools, and civilian deaths due to air strikes which hit farms, water wells, homes, school buses and other essential facilities (Human Rights Watch 2021). In 2016, there were more than 2.7 million internally displaced people (Task Force on Population Movement 2016). Humanitarian relief has almost wholly replaced international development work. Development gains have been lost; it has been estimated that by 2019 development had already been set back by 21 years (Moyer, Hanna, Bohl and Mapes 2019, p. 15). The same study estimated that if the war were to last until 2030, development would be reversed by 39 years, leaving Yemen in the same state of development as it experienced in the early 1990s (Moyer et al. 2019, p. 15). A planned 2020-2022 UNDP Social Protection Enhancement and COVID-19 Response Project (SPECRP) has focused on "cash-for-work, cash-for-nutrition, community assets, MSME support, and food market resilience" indicating a return to more direct financial support for families and small businesses (UNDP no date). In other words, the focus has been on providing a safety

net. However, as White and Van der Boor (2021) argue, the capability approach enables the identification of a range of factors impacting the mental health of people suffering from war and displacement, and that support offered should not only meet basic needs but should start to assess and support the opportunities people value in life in the longer term.

Violence against women has increased due to both the war and the COVID-19 pandemic (Moyer et al. 2019). Rohwerder (2017) identified further effects of the war on gender dynamics, including more female headed households, more women in employment, and increases in the number of pregnancies and child marriages, as well as difficulties due to illiteracy in accessing help (Rohwerder 2017, pp. 2-3). Women have not been allowed to participate in formal peace talks despite their involvement at local level (Rohwerder 2017, p. 3), although some have participated in decision-making in community committees supported by international NGOs (Gressman 2016). Ongoing efforts by UN Women and others to try to address issues of gender inequality and empowerment, specifically in humanitarian action and peacebuilding initiatives, need to be accompanied by persuasive dialogue about the benefits to the future of Yemen of greater participation of women in education and decision-making.

There are other contexts which share similarities with the situation in Yemen in terms of women's capabilities being limited by the cultural context, for example women with disabilities in Pakistan (Hammad and Singal 2015), the education of girls in Bangladesh (Arends-Kuenning and Amin 2001), and indeed anywhere where social norms restrict women's access to education, decision-making and finance. In such contexts, it is important that women benefit from meaningful participation in planning and have a real opportunity to say what they value being and doing because this will assist in setting and achieving project outputs and outcomes. Greater involvement of national consultants in evaluation, taking account of lessons learned, will also be relevant to some initiatives. An important lesson from the present research is that thought needs to be given to the availability of resources after a project ends for women to be able to use their new-found capacity for voice, skills and knowledge as personal conversion factors. A capability approach requires a broad and long-term view which involves beneficiaries as individuals on the one hand and multiple dialogues among representatives of institutions and organisations.

The availability of resources and country context has to a certain extent been taken into account in the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are described as aspirational, allowing for the fact that some countries may be unable to achieve them. The SDGs are strongly connected to international human rights law, and reflect the predominantly Western model of economic growth, human capital and democracy, thus they are likely to be perceived in some countries as continuing the colonial model and therefore resisted. The language of SDG 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (United Nations 2020, p.34) is likely to remain without meaning and, in some cases, be offensive in some cultures, suggesting that the difficulties in acceptance identified in the present research will, in those cultures, need to be sensitively addressed by policymakers and practitioners alike.

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APPENDIX A Interview Guide

[Notes:

- a. Check participant's understanding of education and development when there is an opportunity to do so
- b. Explain if needed that education refers to courses, training and informal learning outside of the formal education system]

Warm up question: What would you like to share with me about the involvement of IDOs in Yemen?

A Reasons for IDO interventions

1. In your view, why do IDOs get involved in developing countries like Yemen?
[Prompts: historical, political, economic, other]
2. Which IDOs do you know of that are working in Yemen?
3. What are the relationships like between them?
[Probe: with your organisation]
4. Please tell me about IFAD's role in Yemen

B. IFAD policies and processes

1. What policy guidelines do you know of for IFAD's participation in Yemen?
2. What specific policies does IFAD towards women in Yemen?
3. Who is involved in producing the policy?
[Probe: how is it produced, e.g. top-down, participatory]
4. In your view, how well do the policies address the needs of women's education?
5. What programmes and projects are being implemented to help women in Yemen?
[Probe: IFAD programmes/projects]
6. What are your views about the implementation of these programmes?
[Probe: are they implemented as planned? If not, why not?]
7. In your view, how successful are they?
8. Please tell me about any educational activities IFAD is involved in

C. IFAD and women

1. What educational activities are provided by IFAD for women in Yemen?
2. Tell me about women's participation in these activities
[Probe: range, choice/demand]
3. Tell me about women's participation in other aspects of programme(s) /project(s)
[Probe: design, implementation/management, evaluation]

4. In your opinion, are the women sufficiently involved at all stages?
5. Does IFAD put conditions on their financial support in order to guarantee women's participation? [Probe: same for all donors?]

D. Challenges and barriers

1. In your view, what are the challenges/barriers/problems encountered in implementation?
2. How do you think these can be addressed?

EXTENDED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Explore one or more of the following areas according to participant expertise and interest

- The political reasons for humanitarian aid and development support
- The impact of Arab Spring revolution
- The role of international consultants particularly in short-term contract/evaluation
- The voice of grassroot communities in relation to success stories
- The positive and negative impact of the role of international loans in relation to the government policy and responsibility
- The government's policy towards women in particular and disadvantaged groups within the local communities in terms of adult education, community development and women's empowerment

Questions to participants from government sectors

- Why do you think we need a specific policy/specific action for women?
- Although there are many good success stories as a result of this development project, do you know of any strategies used by local authority and project directors to re-design programmes to secure more successes?
- How do you see the impact of Arab Spring revolution on the relationship between government and INGOs?

[Probe: bad/good/difficult/security/safety]

Questions for discussion with NGO participants

- Tell me about your experiences of projects funded by IDOs that support women

[Probe: how grassroots experience differs]

Questions for discussion with IFAD participants

- What are the main issues facing local development workers particularly in projects in rural areas?

[Probe: when working with international consultants,
local authorities]

- How are the relationships between local workers and international consultants when they work on evaluation or short-term consultancy tasks?
- Please say more about the impact of involving women in the design of the programmes and activities

APPENDIX B Ethical Approval



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

The
School
Of
Education.

Ibtissam Al-Farah

Head of School
Professor Jackie Marsh

Department of Educational Studies
388 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2JA

25 September 2012

Telephone: +44 (0114) 222 8081
Fax: +44 (0114) 222 8105
Email: MPhil-PbD@sheffield.ac.uk

Dear Ibtissam,

Ethical Review Application: "The Role of International Organisations in Developing Countries: A Case Study of the International Fund for Agricultural Development's (IFAD) Educational Programmes for Women in Yemen."

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project. I am writing to confirm that your application has now been approved.

You can now proceed with your research but we recommend you refer to the reviewers' additional comments (please see attached).

This letter is evidence that your application has been approved and should be included as an Appendix in your final submission.

Good luck with your research.

Yours sincerely



Felicity Gilligan
PG Officer

ETHICS REVIEWER'S COMMENTS FORM

This form is for use by members of academic staff in the School of Education when reviewing a research ethics application.

Note to reviewers and applicants:

The ethical review process in the School of Education is designed to provide critical response on ethical issues identified in research proposals. For this reason, reviewers' comments are not anonymous*. The comments given here are intended to help applicants (and where appropriate their academic supervisors) to revise their research plans where necessary to ensure that their research is conducted to high ethical standards.

The contents of this form remain internal to the University, and should not be used for wider dissemination without written permission from the Ethics Reviewer named here and the Chair of the Ethics Review Panel.

1. Name of Ethics Reviewer*: <small>Reviewers who wish to make anonymous responses should contact the Chair of the Ethics Review Panel before completing the review.</small>	Alan Skelton
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2. Research Project Title:	The Role of International Organisations in Developing Countries: A case study of the International Fund for Agricultural Development's (IFAD) Educational Programmes for Women in Yemen.
3. Principal Investigator (and name of Tutor/Supervisor in the case of student applications):	Ms I Al-Farah (Sup – Anita Franklin)
4. Academic Department / School:	The School of Education

5. I confirm that I do not have a conflict of interest with the project application <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

6. I confirm that, in my judgment, the application should:			
Be approved:	/Be approved with <i>suggested</i> amendments in '7' below:	Be approved providing <i>requirements</i> specified in '8' below are met:	<u>NOT</u> be approved for the reason(s) given in '9' below:
	x		

7. Approved with the following suggested, optional amendments (i.e. it is left to the discretion of the applicant whether or not to accept the amendments and, if accepted, the ethics reviewers do not need to see the amendments):

I'm not sure whether IFAD is a large organisation – I wondered whether there was any chance of IFAD workers/ reps being identified &, if so, how they might be protected from this above anonymity in research reports.

The application makes reference to focus groups at one point & I don't think there is any mention of this elsewhere in the methodology etc

Notions of 'critical' understanding etc could be put into simpler language in the info sheet.

There could be more precise details on data storage & protecting identity of individuals.

8. Approved providing the following, compulsory requirements are met (i.e. the ethics reviewers need to see the required changes):

9. Not approved for the following reason(s):

10. Date of Ethics Review: 18.9.12

APPENDIX C Participant Consent Form



<u>Participation Consent Form</u>	<u>استمارة مشاركة</u>
Project Title:	اسم المشروع:
The Role of International Organisations in Developing Countries: A case study of the International Fund for Agricultural Development's (IFAD) Educational Programmes for Women in Yemen	دور المنظمات التنموية العالمية في دول العالم النامي: دراسة حالة عن دور منظمة ايفاد في البرامج التعليمية للمرأة في اليمن.
Participant Identification Number for this project:	رقم المشاركة في هذا البحث:
I confirm that I have read and understand the information in the letter dated _____ for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	اقر بانني قد قرأت و فهمت المعلومات في الرسالة بتاريخ المتعلقة بالمشروع البحثي اعلاه وقد اتيتحت لي الفرصة لطرح اسئلة توضيحية.
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. If I chose to do so I must contact the researcher named above.	افهم بان مشاركتي في هذا المشروع البحثي هي تطوعية ولي الحرة في الانسحاب من الدراسة بدون ابدأ اي اسباب. في حالة قررت الانسحاب يجب علي ان ابلي الباحثة.
I agree to be audio recorded during the interview.	اوافق ان يتم تسجيل المقابلة الشخصية.
I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for YOUR NAME to have access to my anonymised responses.	افهم بان شخصيتي سوف تكون مبهمة قبل عملية تحليل البيانات. واعطى الباحثة الاحقية في استخدام المعلومات التي ذكرتها في المقابلة.
I agree to take part in the above research project.	اوافق على المشاركة في هذا المشروع البحثي.
Name of Participant _____	اسم المشارك _____
Date _____	التاريخ _____
Signature _____	التوقيع _____
Researcher _____	اسم الباحث _____
Date _____	التاريخ _____
Signature _____	التوقيع _____

يتم التوقيع وتاريخ هذه الاستمارة. To be signed and dated in presence of the participant. امام المشارك

APPENDIX D Images from Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Project



Women-only classes in formal and less formal settings. Note the traditional dress in which women cover their whole body in black including their faces.



Women in a Savings and Credit Group with the community worker in a home-based setting



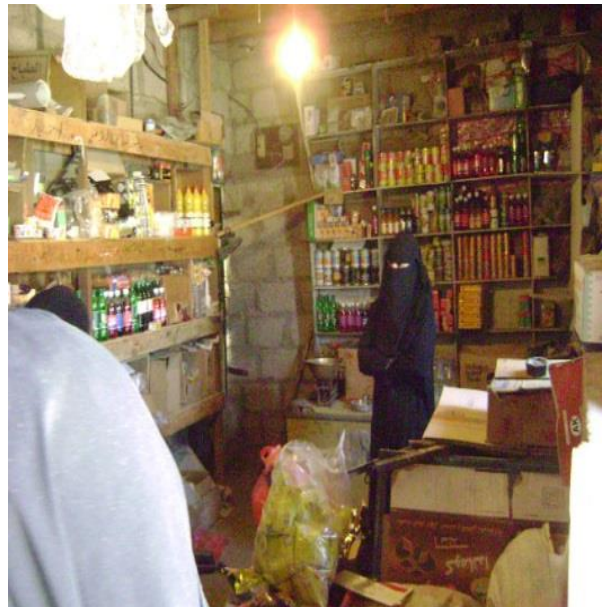
Women and men working together in an outdoor discussion.



Women and men working together in a workshop



Women participants in a community management programme with IFAD coordinator



Women in business

APPENDIX E Conference Presentations

9 th May 2017	The Research Student Conference 2017 School of Education, The University of Sheffield
29 th April 2015	WRDTC Research Students' Education Conference School of Education, University of Leeds
14 February 2014	Higher Education in the Globalised Age Conference School of Education, The University of Sheffield
2 nd -3 rd June 2013	First Research Student Conference School of Education, The University of Sheffield