

**Measuring Women's Empowerment Projects:  
The Case of Armenia**

By

Amanda Pascal

Submitted to  
Central European University  
Department of Public Policy

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Public Policy*

Supervisor: Professor Andrea Krizsan

Budapest, Hungary  
2012

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to extend my gratitude to my thesis supervisor Andrea Krizsan for her continuous guidance and patience. Thank you to CEU for giving me the opportunity to travel to Armenia to conduct first hand interviews with the organizations selected for this study. Thank you to Aida Ghazaryan, Tsovinar Harutyunyan, Liana Mikayelyan and Susanna Vardanyan for sharing their knowledge with me. A further thank you to Lilit Simonyan and Satik Harutyunyan for participating in e-mail interviews.

## **ABSTRACT**

Women's empowerment programs are now implemented in a majority of the international organizations (IOs) around the world. This thesis examines the case of Armenia by analyzing three women's empowerment projects implemented by international organizations to determine why some women's empowerment programs are successful and why some fail. This study uses a qualitative comparative case study analysis using reports from the implementing IOs and interviews from the IO representative as well as coordinating local non-governmental organizations. From the literature written by practitioners and scholars the paper established a framework used to analyze the selected cases including: Access, Capacity, Participation, Action and a Long-term Sustainability plan. The findings conclude that the cooperation between IOs, civil society members and individuals are required in order for women to mobilize and take action. Moreover, a plan for long-term sustainability is also necessary in order for a women's empowerment program to be successful.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	i
ABSTRACT .....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	i
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	iii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER I- Theoretical Framework and Literature Review .....	9
1.1 Defining Empowerment: A Tool for Development .....	10
1.1.1 Economical Empowerment .....	15
1.1.2 Political Empowerment.....	16
1.1.3 Educational Empowerment .....	17
1.1.4 Legal Empowerment.....	18
1.2 Frameworks of Empowerment.....	18
CHAPTER II- Presentation of the Cases .....	23
2.1- Peace Corps- GLOW Camp.....	23
2.2- OSCE-Women’s Resource Center’s .....	25
2.3- UNFPA- Combating Gender Based Violence and Gender Theme Group.....	27
CHAPTER III- Comparative Analysis.....	30
3.1 Measuring Women’s Empowerment in the Three Cases .....	30
3.2 Operationalizing Women’s Empowerment .....	34
3.2.1 Access .....	34
3.2.2 Capacity .....	34
3.2.3 Participation .....	35
3.2.4 Action.....	36

3.2.5 Long-Term Sustainability Plan .....	38
3.3 Summary of Findings .....	39
CONCLUSION.....	42
ANNEX A: .....	44
Bibliography .....	45

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CEE- Central and Eastern Europe
- DV- Domestic Violence
- FSU- Former Soviet Union
- GAD- Gender and Development
- GBV- Gender Based Violence
- GLOW- Girls Leading Our World
- GTG- Gender Theme Group
- IFI-International Financial Institutions
- IO- International Organization
- MGO- Multi-governmental Organization
- NGO- Non-governmental Organization
- OSCE- Organization for the Security and Co-operation in Europe
- PC- Peace Corps
- PCV- Peace Corps volunteer
- SU- Soviet Union
- SYC- Stepanavan Youth Center
- UN- United Nations
- UNFPA- United Nations Population Fund
- WID- Women in Development
- WIG- Women's Initiative Group
- WRC- Women's Resource Center

## INTRODUCTION

In the development sector, agencies and organizations have adopted gender programs and women's empowerment projects worldwide. From specific projects to gender mainstreaming in economical, political, health and educational programs. Enhancing gender equality and empowering women in development is linked as a contributing factor in regards to aid effectiveness and sustainability (UNWomen, 2012; World Bank 1999). Promoting gender equality and eliminating obstacles that prevent women from having the same access as men to economic opportunities or rights, allow women to participate in the economy and society more equally. This will bring desired results of aid and will create better sustainability. Projects aimed at creating equal policies for women help improve economic activities in the country as well as development outcomes (World Bank, 2001). Currently development agencies are about a half a century old and now the hot topic is sustainability and effectiveness (Campbell & Teghtsoonian 2010, 177). Specifically with regard to women's empowerment projects and promoting gender equality, critics of development aid question how these programs are assisting the advancement of women in the developing world (World Bank, 2001).

Since international organizations (IOs) have adopted policies aimed to promote more gender equality and empower women, the concept of empowerment is often debated in the academic and practical spheres. The concept of empowerment is best defined by Naila Kabeer, who is known for her studies and publications on gender mainstreaming in development, "Women's empowerment is about the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability" (Kabeer, 1999, 435). From the literature, the

main four types of empowerment are: educational, economical, political and legal, which are best achieved by a grassroots approach and involve women's groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activists (Moser 1993; Kabeer, 1994). Women's groups are vital at enabling women to increase their control of resources and their decision-making capacity (Sen and Grown, 1987, 87). Creating a space where women can come together and create action for change is the way women can be empowered to be agents of change (Agarwal, 2001). From this platform, women will be able to empower themselves, which is vital to challenge gender inequality in society and change gender norms in patriarchal societies (Batliwala, 1994, 133).

In the development discourse many practitioners and academics focus on democracy promotion by assisting political parties, civil society and the promotion of free and fair elections (Diamond, 2008; Huntington, 1991; Burnell, 2011). There are numerous books and articles written about the transition to democracy in Central and Eastern European (CEE) and countries from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) (Levitsky & Lucan, 2010; Carothers, 2002) and particularly the role of women during this transition and post-transition period (Funk & Mueller, 1993; Johnson & Robinson, 2007; Silova & Magno, 2004). However, the South Caucasus region lacks the proper research to truly understand the uniqueness of this particular area in the world. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are all countries with histories that span back to ancient times, and due to their strategic geographic location linking the Black and the Caspian Seas, have been the battle ground through the centuries and having been conquered and controlled by the Persians, the Ottomans and the Russian Empire. The region has since gained independence in 1991 after the fall of the Soviet Union (SU) however the transition to democracy has been tarnished by conflict, corruption and elites controlling the major industries across all three countries (de Waal, 2010).

During the 1990's the former Soviet Union (FSU) experienced a drastic decline in the economy and government budgets, and increased poverty. The shortcomings of civil society disproportionate on a male/ female scale, were apparent and affected women as a whole. This was evident when the reemerging gender stereotypes resurfaced and gender disparities in the political sphere, employment, wages and the labor force largely favored men. Additionally, new forms of discrimination and disparities arose toward women such as forced labor, human trafficking and violence against women (Silova & Magno 2004, 418).

After the fall of the SU, IOs and multi-governmental organizations (MGOs) flocked to the newly independent states and assisted these countries with their transition to democracy. The South Caucasus was a unique cluster of countries that once lived in harmony, yet after the SU collapsed the region was plagued with war and territorial disputes over land (de Waal, 2010). Over the past 20 years, the region has received over \$7.2 billion in foreign assistance. Georgia has seen the most progress in its transition to democracy, while Azerbaijan has boomed into an oil wealth nation and is now dealing with elite members of society benefiting from the newly found oil money (MacFarlane, 2011). Armenia is the least developed and most isolated out of the three. Since the Nagorno-Karabakh<sup>1</sup> conflict with Azerbaijan in the '90s, the Azeri and Turkish borders have been closed thus starting its seclusion within the region (United Nations, 2004). Compared to the other South Caucasus nations, Armenia is ranked 84 in the Human Development Index<sup>2</sup> (HDI) while Georgia and Azerbaijan rank 75 and 76 respectively (UNDP, 2012).

---

<sup>1</sup>Nagorno-Karabakh is a territory of land occupied by ethnic Armenians, however it is officially part of Azerbaijan. Before the collapse of the SU, conflict started to arise in this area and following the collapse of the SU an all out war started between Armenia and Azerbaijan. There was a cease fire in 1994 (The World Fact Book- Armenia)

<sup>2</sup> The Human Development Index is developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that measures three dimensions of human development: health, education and income (UNDP, 2012).

In addition to its underdeveloped regions, the role of women in Armenia is often limited to traditional roles in the family and often secluded to certain acceptable sectors in the economy (Wistrand & Mkhitarian 2007, 5). Women are mainly represented in the informal sector spending five times as much time as men working around the house and as caregivers. In the formal working environment, women typically dominate the education, health, and culture sectors but on average their salary is only 60% of men's salaries. A concept paper issued by the Armenian government on implementing a gender policy stated that sex discrimination in the labor force is still present due to lack of implementation of equality laws and existing social traditions (Armenia Parliament, 2010). These social traditions are complemented by the media reinforcing women's roles in the family as caregivers (Wistrand & Mkhitarian 2007, 5).

After Armenia's independence, International assistance has been the main driver of development. Major donors since 1991 include the US government (USD 1.6+ billion), the World Bank (USD 896 million), the European Union (USD 439 million), the IMF (USD 320 million), Germany (approximately USD 213.6 million) and Great Britain (USD 33.6 million) (WikiLeak, 2006). When the country ratified its constitution, women were equal in labor rights, home ownership, and family matters however strong gender roles particularly in the family remained prevalent. Women in Armenia are legally equal through the constitution, however since it is a conservative society, women are often not allowed to own their own businesses and there are few women in the political sphere. Social norms limit women from living on their own, publically sitting in a restaurant alone, or congregating with groups of

women. The situation is intertwined with traditional gender roles (Wistrand & Mkhitarian 2007, 6).

In order to address issues related to women, development organizations and agencies started to include women in development and incorporate gender equality and women's empowerment into their goals and development agenda. The problem with most IOs and MGOs, habitually use a top-down approach (Fonjong 2001, 223; Sen and Grown 1985), by collaborating more with governmental actors and policy makers and less with individuals and national/local NGOs. With regard to gender equality, IOs and MGOs usually start at the government level and assist in law reforms related to gender equality, and domestic violence (DV) (Fonjong 2001, 223). Researchers and activists, however, point out that the way to empower women and promote gender equality is to have development organizations use a bottom-up approach and a grassroots led initiative in order to truly empower women (Kabeer 1994; Afshar 1998, 7; Tinker 1990, 5). Programs should include both formal and informal women's groups, women's NGOs and other civil society actors dealing with women's issues.

In the case of Armenia, the country has had developmental organizations since 1991, and several IOs have gender empowerment programs within their programs or have specific projects directed toward gender empowerment. Researchers have noted that the roles of women's organizations are vital to empower women (Sen and Grown, 1987, 87). Yet there are few women's NGOs throughout Armenia and the ones that do exist are marginalized and lack capacity in the regions. This further justifies why Armenia is an ideal case to study in regards to, "Why are women's empowerment programs in Armenia successful and why are some not?" This paper will analyze three women's empowerment programs using a gender empowerment framework constructed by different scholars and practitioners (Longwe, 1995;

Narayan, 2002; Caubergs & Charlier, 2007). From these measurements of empowerment described in chapter one will analyze the three cases in chapter three and will interpret if these programs empowered women. A successful women's empowerment project would need to fulfill all five elements of empowerment constructed from the literature: *Access, Capacity, Participation, Action* and additionally have a plan for *Long-term Sustainability*.

My hypothesis stresses that a collaboration and participation between the: a) The implementing IOs, b) Local NGOs, and c) Individuals, as well as having a plan for long-term sustainability are necessary in order to be a successful women's empowerment project. Combining all three actors will empower women to mobilize themselves and take action to change their social situation. Adding a plan for long-term sustainability will allow the project to continue after the IO has completed the project, which is an important factor to evaluate in development projects. This hypothesis is proven in chapter three where the cases are analyzed through a gender-analysis lens from the framework created for this study.

The framework, results and recommendations could be used to analyze other women's empowerment programs around the world to better promote gender equality in the developing world. The scope of this study is to research how these IOs designed and implemented these women's empowerment projects through a women's empowerment analysis. This study does not evaluate these projects or measure the social effects and benefits the individual women gained from these projects. This type of research would require more of a participatory research methodology, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

This paper uses a qualitative comparative case study analysis from cases in Armenia using a framework of how women's empowerment is measured, taken from the literature. The dependent variable is women's empowerment and the framework describes how it is achieved by the elements of empowerment: Access, Capacity, Participation, Action, and a Long-term Sustainability plan. From all the independent variables listed above will be used to analyze the cases used for this study to determine if they were successful programs or not.

The data collected and analyzed for this paper are from targeted, semi-formal interviews, as well as reports produced by the respective agencies. The cases chosen for this study are programs implemented by the US Peace Corps (PC), the Organization for the Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). These three organizations are all highly respected organizations in Armenia and incorporate gender equality and women's empowerment in almost all of their projects. The interviews were targeted interviews and chosen because their empowerment programs dealt with three out of the four types of women's empowerment: educational, economic and political. Representatives and Project Analysts from these three agencies were interviewed face-to-face in Yerevan, Armenia in April 2012. The women's empowerment programs implemented by the IOs and coordinating local/regional NGOs are described as well as a list of the interviewees in Annex A. All three local and regional NGOs were selected because of their partnerships with the respective IO and the specific empowerment project. All face-to-face interviews were recorded<sup>3</sup> and were semi-structured with open-ended questions; the information gathered from the interviews was used to analyze the cases. Observations from my 26 months living and working in Armenia (June 2009-July 2011) are used in my analysis and particularly from my personal experience organizing and administrating GLOW camp

---

<sup>3</sup> Tape recording of the interviews are available on request.

for two years. Additionally, when I conducted my research in Armenia, I attended a Gender Theme Group (GTG) meeting on April 13, 2012 at the UN House in Yerevan, Armenia to observe and take notes for the third case in this study.

The following chapter will provide a theoretical background as well as relevant literature written about women's empowerment in the development sector. From what is written about empowerment and how development organizations can empower women, I create a framework on how to measure empowerment in order to analyze the IOs' projects. The second chapter will describe the three projects for this study. The last chapter will analyze the projects based on the framework described from the first chapter. The conclusion will summarize the paper and will close with recommendations for the programs in Armenia.

## CHAPTER I- Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter will explore the theoretical debate regarding empowerment, empowerment in development work and the different frameworks of empowerment. The first section defines empowerment from various scholars, researchers and activists then it illustrates how empowerment was introduced into the development sector. The second section then identifies different frameworks used to operationalize empowerment projects or programs from scholars and practitioners. Lastly, the framework that is described at the end of this chapter will be used to examine the three cases for this paper.

Before empowerment is defined and explained as to how it was adopted as a tool in the development sector, a brief touching on the concepts between agency versus structure needs to be addressed. From the different books, articles and journals written about empowerment in the development sector, *how* empowerment is to be achieved either through agency or structure is a frequent debate. Agency refers to, “The capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices” and structure, “Covers the rules and social forces (such as class, religion, gender, ethnicity, customs, etc.) that limit or influence the opportunities that determine the actions of individuals” (Bird et. al. 2009, 9). Oxaal and Baden in Bird et. al. indicated that development agencies increasing a woman’s access to micro-credit loans to start her own business [focusing on agency] has the assumption that it will increase her decision-making ability in her private and public life. This does not necessarily translate to empowerment; however, the *context* in which it was delivered has the potential to enable a woman to increase her control over assets and has enlarged her bargaining power (Bird et. al. 2009, 10). Correspondingly, studies have shown (Alsop and

Norton, 2004; Mosse, 2005) that involving local NGOs in trainings and workshops does not benefit the most marginalized groups and at the same time, only focuses on power structures by focusing on democracy programs or promoting equal political representation which predominantly benefited the middle class (ibid). Addressing one instead of the other has its downfalls. A complementary approach of the two is the best method to empower *agents of change* to change the *social structures* that were once constraining them.

### **1.1 Defining Empowerment: A Tool for Development**

The following section will explore the concept of empowerment and illustrate how women's empowerment was introduced in the development sector. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional concept that comes from an array of disciplines in the scholarly and practical fields. The root of empowerment comes from the term *power*, which is often a contested concept in social and political theory (Sardenberg 2008, 4). Specifically *women's empowerment* from the feminist perspective scholar, Outshoorn, argued women are allegedly a disadvantaged group, not equal to men, but are not powerless and could obtain power. The idea that power could be possessed and the notion that women could try to 'obtain' power explained by Outshoorn (Outshoorn 1987: 28), was a new revelation later adopted by feminists and development agencies in order to transfer *power to* women. The different categories of power explained by Rowlands are compiled in four dimensions: Power Over, Power To, Power With, and Power Within. Table 1 illustrates the different dimensions of power in relation to empowerment. Rowlands defines empowerment as a process, and includes personal development and requires action to change (Rowlands 1997, 15).

Table 1: Dimensions of Power and the Implications towards Empowerment

<b>Type of Power</b>	<b>Implications Towards Empowerment</b>
<b>Power Over:</b> Possessing the capacity to influence and coerce	Changes in necessary resources and power to contest constraints
<b>Power To:</b> Acquiring change of existing hierarchies	Allowing access to opportunities and increasing one's capacity
<b>Power With:</b> Increased power by collective action	Mobilized unification to change existing assumptions
<b>Power from Within:</b> Increased sense of self awareness	Increased awareness and mobilized to change

Source: Rowlands 1997.

Similar to Rowlands, other scholars and practitioners have parallel definitions of empowerment that have related elements such as: change/increase in resources, access, awareness of their disadvantaged situation and action taken by individuals and/or collectively (McWhirter in Rowlands, 1995; Mosedale 2005, 252; Batliwala, 1994, 132; Narayan, 2002). Along with congruent themes identified in these definitions, scholars and practitioners stress that empowerment is a process achieved on an individual and collective level. The individual level being how individuals carry out their life plans, implies empowering individuals by giving them greater choice and helping them to seize opportunities, and improve their quality of life in the long run. The collective level refers to the shift towards equity in society which enables its members to form organizations and put in place mechanisms, systems and structures that guarantee women and men the same opportunities and rights when planning their lives (Cauger and Charlier, 2007). A majority of feminist scholars agree that collective grassroots activism is necessary to empower women in a community in order for change to happen (Moser 1993; Kabeer, 1994). Defining the concept of empowerment has now explained *what* it entails and *how* it is to be obtained.

Moving to how empowerment was introduced into the development sector dates back to the late '60s and early '70s in Latin American literacy projects (Bird et. al. 2009, 5). The 1970s' publication of Ester Boserup's *Woman's Role in Economic Development* correlated with developmental experts concerns about gender discrimination in the development process (Boserup, 1970). Scholars argue it was her book that led to the United Nations (UN) developing the decade for women (Tinker, 1990, 8; Kabeer 1994, 2). The simple text of Boserups book pointed out how development work looked over women and had misconceptions of the potentially strong actors women could be in the development process. Simply painting a picture of how women are often bypassed from government and developmental programs changed the discourse of women in development from beneficiaries of welfare programs to women's equality programs in development (Kabeer 1994, 6).

From then, women scholars focused on ways to counteract and discourage discrimination in the workplace, society and the community. In the '80s, empowerment was devised as a social change, to enable ignored social groups to claim their rights cooperatively as individuals (Bird et. al. 2009, 2). In 1984, the Harvard Institute for International Development in collaboration with the Women in Development office of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) created a Gender Roles Framework based on the assumption that women were unable to benefit from development aid because efforts made by agencies did not recognize women's potential to contribute to the development process. This started the Women in Development (WID) discourse. Critics of the WID approach stated that women were then used as actors in development, which then became a burden to women in addition to their household duties. The WID approach did not challenge the reality of gender roles and why women were discriminated against in the labor force, thus the Gender and Development (GAD) approach was created (Bird et. al. 2009, 3). GAD addressed

the dynamics of gender relations in the social context, in values and in power (Three common gender research methodologies, 2007). The tool of empowering women would challenge gender roles in society and lead to the development of empowerment projects and programs in the development sector.

Development agencies and policy makers have adopted the term empowerment, however the definition is rarely explained. Often times the lack of definition is the major reason why empowerment programs do not realize their true potential and the reaching of their desired outcomes. Scholars such as Moser (1993), Rowlands (1995) and Rai (2002) debate about empowerment in the developing world. According to Moser, development agencies use a more WID because it is a less “threatening” and “less confrontational” approach to including a women’s perspective in development as opposed to a GAD approach. A GAD approach is more from the feminist discourse towards development where it reacts to unequal social and power relations between men and women (Moser, 1993). However many IOs and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) use the term GAD in their programs (World Bank, 1999) and run the hazard of co-option by interchangeably using WID, confusing the theoretical differences and limiting its effect in development (Rai 2002, 73).

Depending on the organization and project, empowerment activities can be useful to minorities and any marginalized groups. For the purposes of this paper, gender empowerment will be examining women specifically. Development agencies often use the two terms synonymously and are highly criticized for their lack of distinction and properly defining gender or woman, thus confusing the appropriate approach to go about empowering women. This discussion however goes beyond the scope of this paper<sup>4</sup>. Others criticize how IOs and

---

<sup>4</sup> Warren argues that the international organizations rarely define gender and development and that it reflects in their failures due to their lack of understanding of the different methodologies and approaches to incorporating gender into their

development agencies use the concept of empowerment and its loose definition and do not address the roots of the problems they are trying to address (Fiedrich et. al., 2003, Cornwall and Brock, 2005).

At the Beijing UN Conference in 1995, the Beijing Declaration (Section 13) presented women's empowerment as a key strategy for development and stated the following, "Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace" (UN, 1995). In order to measure their outputs, many IOs use more of a quantitative approach as indicators to quantify the results of their projects although it does not reflect economic and social structures, which would lead to empowerment. Simply counting the number of women political parliamentarians and women in management positions is not enough to measure women's empowerment (Kabeer, 1994).

Women's activists and researchers argue that women's groups are vital for enabling women to increase their control of resources and their decision-making capacity (Sen & Grown, 1987, 87). Afshar states, "To succeed, women must become active both at the level of discovering strategies and implementing them at the level of national politics. They must continue to fight to maintain the language of equality and translate it into practicable measures" (Afshar 1998, 6). A study by Naila Kabeer in Bangladesh found that women's participation in microcredit programs lead to increased participation in community affairs, a reduction in domestic violence and an increase in a sense of power (Kabeer 2001, 81).

---

development planning. Their misconceptions or lack of knowledge of the different gender-analysis frameworks reflect in the way they train their employees and their outcomes of their programs or projects (Warren, 2007).

Bina Agarwal argues that the strategy to empower women should have a centralized space of allowing the women to function in their own interest in order to find innovating ways to advance their position economically, finding their voice, and addressing the social inequalities (Agarwal, 2001). This implies that there is a need for women to gather and discuss how they can change their situation and act on it collectively. Batliwala states that empowerment does not come from economic status; rich women still suffer from abuse and violence. It is, “Women recognizing the ideology that legitimizes male domination and understanding how it perpetuates their oppression” (1994, 248). She goes on and states that outside agents are necessary for women by inspiring new ideas and encouraging others to take action (Batliwala, 1994, 132).

Studies from Moser (1993), Kabeer (1994), Agarwal (2001) and Batliwala (1994) imply that women’s empowerment works well on a grassroots level when women have a platform that allows them to utilize their voice in order to take action collectively and make changes in their lives. Several books, journals and articles have been written on how to empower women and could be clustered into four main categories: economic, political, educational, and legal empowerment. These approaches will be discussed in more details in the following sub-sections.

### **1.1.1 Economical Empowerment**

A definition from Rowlands states, “It is about individuals being able to maximize the opportunities available to them without or despite constraints of structure and State” (Rowlands 1995, 104) Programs encompassed in economic empowerment include: microfinance/ loans with low interest rates given to target groups, business training, self-

employment programs, enhancing “bargaining power” of communities, financial competency trainings and community-based programs. This capacity building of individuals or communities will empower them to be able to participate in the economy through a small business or financial assistance and to take part in the market economy (Rowlands 1995, 102). However studies by Goetz and Sen Gupta in Bangladesh (1996) showed that loans attained by women were often controlled by their male relatives and women had to find other sources in order to repay their loans. This brings to light that access to resources does not translate to greater economic autonomy. But by making resources readily available to women and granting them access to these resources and trainings, does empower them to be active members of their communities through these programs (Rowlands 1995, 101).

### **1.1.2 Political Empowerment**

Political empowerment can be devised by the rights-based approach to development<sup>5</sup>, to increase one’s capacity to assess, organize and act collectively for collective change (Bird et. al. 2009, 6). Goetz wrote how women in the government have the potential to help advance women’s rights and bring more parity to society. However she notes that once in power, many women often find policy implementation obstructing the effectiveness of gender-equal policies. Governments institutionalizing women’s affairs ministries have fallen short of their desired goal of addressing and implementing gender equal reforms. Often times these bureaucratic agencies are controlled by the ruling parties agenda and controls women, instead of enabling them (Goetz 2009, 5). Other research stress that political empowerment can also be used by increasing ones access to decision-making bodies at all levels of the government

---

<sup>5</sup> Additional readings regarding a rights-based approach to development in empowering women are Kapur and Duvvury, 2006 and The Legal Empowerment Approach to International Development, 2011.

(national, regional, and local). Creating a formal or informal space where women as individuals, informal groups or members of civil society to use their voice to shed light on issues (domestic violence, trafficking, early marriage, etc.) or problems they want to be heard by government officials, is an example of how development agencies can politically empower women (Kabeer 1994; Afshar, 1998).

Women's quotas have been used as a tool to increase political representation in local and national levels. Nevertheless, women in governing bodies does not translate to more gender equal policies, due to a number of reasons from social cleavages to a corrupt system and simple politics hinder women politicians from pursuing women's rights and a gender equal agenda. Development agencies typically have to work with governments and political parties to incorporate quotas and establish platforms where women can partake in decision-making institutions. In order to be prepared to take an elected position, women must be trained and educated in order to properly prepare for a career in public office, this can be done through democratization programs often implemented by development agencies and IOs (Goetz 2009, 15).

### **1.1.3 Educational Empowerment**

Educational empowerment is defined by the World Bank as having access to quality education without being discriminated against on the basis of religion, ethnicity, gender, age, or socio-economical status (World Bank, 2001). Access to education for women allows them to take control over their lives, which is often not allowed in traditional communities. Because of this, educational empowerment often includes community work and awareness raising to teach women and girls their rights and to educate men and boys on the importance

of educating their wives and daughters (World Bank, 2001). Depending on the condition of the country, a development agency could assist in infrastructure, curriculum development, assist with relevant legislation, help collect relevant data and compile manuals and booklets. In these cases, development agencies focus on primary education to meet the basic needs of reading and writing.

#### **1.1.4 Legal Empowerment**

Legal empowerment described in a White Paper from the Haki network defined the concept as, “The use of law as a tool to empower the poor and marginalized” (The Legal Empowerment Approach to International Development, 2011). Increasing a person’s access to legal services and alternative dispute mechanisms as a tool for change, in turn, empowers citizens and communities to be agents in their own advancement (ibid). This approach exceeds typical government-focused rule of law approaches by emphasizing the role of the citizen and community as the ultimate agents of reform and social change, which is found in all forms of empowerment.

### **1.2 Frameworks of Empowerment**

Now that empowerment is defined, specifically on how women are empowered in the development context, the following section will illustrate how to measure empowerment. From different frameworks on how to operationalize women’s empowerment programs implemented by IOs, I will propose a specific framework to analyze the three cases selected for this study. Many of the frameworks described in the literature use a participatory

approach, which is not the intent of this paper.<sup>6</sup> Other frameworks require quantitative data and are used as an evaluation of empowerment projects, which again is not the intent of this study.<sup>7</sup> The framework used in this study is devised from a gender-analysis framework that specify variables of women's empowerment that are important when implementing a project or program by IOs.

The three frameworks that I used to measure women's empowerment are from scholars and practitioners. One framework of empowerment came from Sara Longwe (Longwe, 1995), another from the World Bank (Narayan, 2002) and the third from a working group for the Commission on Women and Development (Caubergs & Charlier, 2007). The most frequently cited and adopted framework by UNICEF and the formally known UNIFEM (now UN Women) was Sara Longwe's women's empowerment framework. Her framework is often visualized as a pyramid but she emphasizes that it is a process and a cycle. The five elements of empowerment are: Welfare, Access, Conscientisation, Mobilization, and Control. It is designed for development agencies to visualize where their programs and projects help empower women and on which level, the stronger, better-designed programs should surpass the access level and focus on mobilization and control (Longwe, 1995). The World Bank emphasized access and participation in decision-making as crucial elements in measuring empowerment. Holding public and private actors accountable for policy actions and budgeting was also noted on how to empower women (Narayan, 2002). The working group for the Commission on Women and Development focused on measuring empowerment on both the individual and collective level, highlighting access to resources, knowledge, realization and the capacity to take action (Caubergs & Charlier, 2007).

---

<sup>6</sup> Sarah Mosedale's framework is best described in "Assessing Women's Empowerment Towards a Conceptual Framework." 2005. *Journal of International Development* 17, no. 1: 243-257. [www.interscience.wiley.com](http://www.interscience.wiley.com) (15 May 2012).

<sup>7</sup> A compiled analysis of how to measure women's empowerment is best found in Narayan, Deepa, Anju Malhotra, Signey Ruth Schuler, and Carol Boender. "Measuring Women's Empowerment as a Variable in International Development." In *Measuring Empowerment*, 71-88. Washington: World Bank Publications, 2005.

By analyzing the different frameworks, the following aspects and themes emerge: Access, Capacity, Participation and Action. These four indicators I will use to illustrate how an empowerment program will achieve success by empowering women. Additionally, I will add a component of long-term sustainability since it is vital to analyze if the project will continue once the donor organization has completed its project. There are several models of sustainability incorporating different views on what should be sustainable. In the context of women's empowerment in development a combination of an economical and socio-political model will be used to define sustainability. A simple definition from Dempster in Chapman and Nkansa states, "Sustainability is the ability of an activity or system to persist" (2006, 511). From the different models of sustainability they entail the program continuing reoccurring costs and continuing its benefits after the donor organization ceased its funding (Harris 2000; Dahl 1995). Additionally through the transfer of knowledge and capacity given from the donor organization is a way to have a sustainable project (Dahl 1995). Capacity building is already an element within the framework used for this study, thus this is already covered. The following table visualizes the different elements needed to have a successful women's empowerment project.

Table 2: Measuring Women's Empowerment

<i>Elements of Empowerment</i>	
<i>Access</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased women's <b>access to resources</b>, income, tools or technology, information about opportunities and their rights.</li> </ul>
<i>Capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased women's <b>knowledge</b> through trainings, workshops, and exchange programs.</li> <li>• Increased know-how to take action, make decisions, take responsibility and to use one's own resources.</li> </ul>
<i>Participation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From a <b>space/ platform</b> created, knowledge exchange and a plan of action is created.</li> <li>• Women are <b>mobilized</b> and ready to take action</li> </ul>
<i>Action</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the resources attained, knowledge gained and participants collectively mobilized; women taking the next step and <b>doing</b> something that was desired individually or collectively.</li> </ul>
<i>Long-Term Sustainability Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IO and local actors create a plan to accomplish long-term sustainability: <b>financially</b> and <b>continuing benefits</b> of the project</li> </ul>

The element of *access* is being given an opportunity to attain new resources, either material resources or access to new information about opportunities or their rights. *Capacity* is increasing ones knowledge through trainings, information and awareness raising. This newly acquired knowledge would then transform to mobilization and action, which are the remaining elements of women's empowerment. *Participation* is emphasizing individuals and groups/communities are collaborating and planning and are mobilizing, including: the IO, Individuals (women and men) and civil society groups (NGOs). Lastly, these individuals and/or collective groups need to take *action* in order to have successfully empowered women. Once the participants have gained access, acquired knowledge, collectively mobilized a plan of action, and then action is taken is when a women's empowerment project is successful. To maintain this women's empowerment project after the implementing IO has completed the

project needs to have a *plan for long-term sustainability*. This is an important factor in any development project. In order to assess the projects for this study the women's empowerment project needs to exemplify how it will address long-term sustainability: financially and by continuing the operation (benefits) of the project. A combination of all five elements in an empowerment project is necessary when IOs are implementing projects aimed at empowering women.

This chapter explained what empowerment is and how it is to be achieved in the context of development. It then illustrated how empowerment is measured which will be used to analyze the cases for this study. The proceeding chapter will introduce the three projects implemented by IOs in Armenia.

## **CHAPTER II- Presentation of the Cases**

The previous chapter described from the literature what empowerment means in the context of development. Literature from researchers and practitioners was then used to create an empowerment framework for this study. This chapter will now introduce the three cases: Peace Corps, Girls Leading Our World (GLOW) camp, OSCEs, Women's Resource Centers (WRCs), and UNFPAs, Combating Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Armenia and the Gender Theme Group (GTG).

### **2.1- Peace Corps- GLOW Camp**

The United States Peace Corps (PC) is a grassroots development organization established in 1961 from President John F. Kennedy (Peace Corps, 2012). Through its corps of volunteers around the world in developing countries, the volunteers promote several global initiatives and summer camps. Specifically in Armenia the formally WID/GAD initiative which is now called "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" initiative supports and coordinates with a local NGO and carries out Girls Leading Our World (GLOW) camp, which started in PC Romania. Once PC has identified a local NGO, the NGO tailors it to the specific needs and issues that should be dealt with during the camp (Mikayelyan, Liana. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Coordinator at Peace Corps Armenia. Interview with Amanda Pascal. Yerevan, April 12, 2012). GLOW project incorporates a summer camp that is followed by year-long activities with past camp participants throughout the regions of Armenia. This GLOW project fills a critical gap not currently addressed in the Armenian society and offers adolescent girls (60+ girls /year) self-development opportunities in a fun

and friendly atmosphere. The 12 month leadership and empowerment project gives the girls an opportunity to speak about issues they are concerned about, learn new skills and tools to enhance their self-development and become active contributors of Armenia's evolving society (Stepanavan Youth Center, 2009).

The Peace Corps volunteers (PCVs) and local partner, Stepanavan Youth Center (SYC) NGO, have been collaborating together since 2008. From the staff of SYC and the PCVs acting as GLOW co-administrators for the summer camp present lessons on important topics including: self-discovery, character building, self-esteem, gender roles and development, resume writing skills, leadership building activities including a ropes course, team-building activities, sexual education, HIV/AIDS, DV and women's trafficking. The campers also meet with representatives from exchanges programs available for high school and undergraduate students from Armenia to study for a year in America as part of the career development element of the camp (Simonyan, Lilit. Director of Programs at Stepanavan Youth Center. E-mail Interview with Amanda Pascal. May 15, 2012). After the summer camp, there are follow up activities initiated by SYC, PCVs and GLOW alumni. These activities benefit recent GLOW alumni as well as other girls in the community from villages and rural areas of Armenia. Follow-up activities are completed in 30 rural communities where the alumni are from. GLOW project focuses on empowering young girls through education through the camp and its follow-up activities (ibid).

The collaboration between PCVs and SYC start from the design of the camp to its implementation and follow-up activities. Both partners help with the curriculum as well as

recruitment and selection of the camps participants. PC acts as a proxy and assists in funding activities through its main website where individuals are able to donate to the camp using PCs secure site. Additional funding comes from various grants from IOs in Armenia and local diaspora groups in America (Simonyan, 2012). Depending on the individual grant, the process of securing funding for the camp has to be done yearly (ibid).

## **2.2- OSCE-Women's Resource Center's**

In 2007, the gender equality department at the OSCE office in Yerevan under the overarching program of Democratization, compiled a report from two gender experts titled, *Women empowerment and cooperation in Armenia with a focus on the Syunik region*. Gender experts Brigitta Wistrand from Sweden and Armine Mkhitarian from Armenia conducted 15 focus groups and over 40 interviews to understand the reality of women in politics, unemployment of women and women in business (Wistrand & Mkhitarian 2007, 3). Syunik was chosen over other Marz's<sup>8</sup> to conduct the study because Syunik region was the most progressive Marz with women Mayors in villages unlike other regions in the country. In addition, Syunik had a 75% unemployment rate of women and compared to the other Marz's, women were more free and liberal (Harutyunyan, Tsovinar. Senior Programme Assistant from the OSCE Office in Yerevan. Interviewed with Amanda Pascal. Yerevan. April 11, 2012). The report pointed out gaps that were in relation to gender equality and among their recommendations was the establishment of three regional women's centers in Goris, Kapan and Meghri (Wistrand & Mkhitarian 2007, 15).

---

<sup>8</sup> Marz is the term used for region (state) in Armenia, there are ten Marz's in Armenia, not including Yerevan the Capital.

From the report, it noted there is no space for women to converse with one another; men are allowed to network with one another in informal places, restaurants, cafes, etc., which is not normal for women (Wistrand & Mkhitarian 2007, 6). From this observation and the report conducted by the gender experts, OSCE decided to create a platform for women to collaborate and network with one another by establishing three Women's Resource Center's (WRCs). One year before the WRCs were established, OSCE created a Women's Initiative Group (WIG) in the three towns to see what the women involved could create and start projects to demonstrate what direction these women could go in the future. Of particular concern was sustainability; OSCE recognized that this project would only succeed if the future WRCs would be able to sustain themselves financially. The way they would achieve financial sustainability would be through economic and business profits created by the women at the centers (Harutyunyan T, 2012).

Due to constraints of OSCE's budget and the financial crisis, OSCE Yerevan was not able to get official funding for this specific project, however they wanted to continue this project by using funds from their unified budget account to start the organizations for a three year term (2009-2012). In late 2008, from the WIG, OSCE created three boards of directors for the NGOs. The center in Goris was established as a foundation (can charge for services), and Meghri and Kapan were established as NGOs (cannot provide services for money). In 2011, the Secretariat evaluated the WRC's in Armenia and recommended that it is vital to the sustainability of the three centers that OSCE in Yerevan continue their financial and capacity building support beyond the initial three-year project timeframe. As of April 2012, OSCE has requested to continue their project for another three years to headquarters (Harutyunyan T, 2012).

The WRC's were first started to empower women economically and politically, however since the project was set for three years they decided to only pursue economic empowerment since at that time, elections were not until 2012. The WRC's were established and the women were able to create and implement projects in their community. OSCE trained the BOD's, and the staff of the centers through various capacity building workshops and trainings (Harutyunyan, Satik. Project Coordinator at Women's Resource Center- Meghri. E-mail Interview with Amanda Pascal. May 15, 2012). In 2011, women from all three centers participated in an exchange program in Sweden, and from their trainings and new insight they received from the workshops, created a Syunik Women's Resource Network (SWRN). The purpose of the network is to share information among the three centers, and combine their resources and capacity to promote the centers united in the hopes of joining other global and regional women networks throughout the Caucasus' and Europe (Harutyunyan S, 2012). Since the end of 2011, the aim of the centers in now focused on political empowerment by training women who are interested in running for an elected office in the local, regional and national level (Harutyunyan T, 2012).

### **2.3- UNFPA- Combating Gender Based Violence and Gender Theme Group**

The UNFPA in 2008 started a three-year project titled Combating Gender Based Violence (GBV) in the South Caucasus including: Turkey, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Specifically in Armenia, UNFPA focused on five main areas: research, awareness raising, enabling environment, capacity building, and coordination and collaboration. This project was created to address the issue that was typically taboo to mention on a personal level and in the governmental level. At the time the Armenian government had not drafted a law regarding DV. The project aimed at setting the agenda to tackling DV in Armenia through a

top-down approach working with the national, regional and local governments and incorporating national and local NGOs as well as practitioners that would counsel victims of DV (United Nations-a). From this capacity-building project it politically empowered women's NGOs in Armenia by creating a space where the government and local women's NGOs could work together, exchange information and findings and to speak with one another regarding domestic violence in Armenia.

Research was conducted in conjunction with the national statistical service of Armenia and in turn the data that was produced was official and accepted as the governments own data. The research provided sex-disaggregated data, which created an official baseline for policy-makers to assist them in forming appropriate programs aimed at reducing GBV. The awareness raising component produced public campaigns and a documentary on DV. In addition, it trained media on how to report DV throughout Armenia and additional advocacy work compiling information packets and brochures and disseminated them throughout the regions and their network (United Nations-a).

The third component of the project was to assess the laws in Armenia and recommend specific laws that Armenia should adopt in order to enable the environment to implement policies to reduce GBV. Through the capacity building component, UNFPA trained national representatives which included over 160 government representatives from 75 different national institutions ranging from the national level to the municipality level in workshops regarding women's rights, protection and enforcement. Manuals and guidelines were created in order to provide information to journalist, health professionals, police officers and psychologists as well as faith based organizations (FBOs) (United Nations-a). Including the Armenian Apostolic Church has been quite successful in its implementation and is regarded

as a “best practice” throughout UNFPA globally (Ghazaryan, Aida. Programme Analyst United Nations Population Fund- Armenia. Interview with Amanda Pascal. Yerevan. April 13, 2012). The last component of the project entails collaboration and cooperation with the Armenian government and its Ministries, IOs and national and local NGOs. This particular part of the project created a forum for the government and the national and local women’s NGOs to create a dialogue between them. This three-year project drafted two laws: A DV law and a women equality and opportunity law. Unfortunately, both have not been adopted and the DV law has yet to be written the way the government wants it and the equal opportunity law has been written but has not been passed (Ghazaryan, 2012).

This forum that was created from the collaboration and cooperation section of the project created the program *Gender Theme Group* (GTG). Expanding the membership to other IOs and donor agencies thus created a space where the government, international donors and local organizations can meet and discuss issues relating to GBV, gender equality and women’s empowerment in Armenia, again politically empowering women’s NGOs. The group is to act as a forum created by the UN, first headed by UNFPA in Armenia and co-Chaired with OSCE office in Yerevan. The GTG aims towards gender mainstreaming policies and projects implemented from development organizations and will allow other donor agencies to partake and collaborate with the government and local NGOs (United Nations-b).

This chapter introduced the three cases implemented by the three IOs: the Peace Corps, OSCE and UNFPA. The following chapter will analyze these three cases using the framework described in the previous chapter.

## CHAPTER III- Comparative Analysis

This chapter will take the three cases described in the previous chapter and use the framework of women's empowerment illustrated in chapter one to analyze the cases to answer the research question, "Why are women's empowerment programs in Armenia successful and why are some not?" From this analysis will clarify which programs were successful in Armenia and which were not. The missing elements of the framework will point out the missing links programs were lacking based on the five elements of a women's empowerment program: *Access*, *Capacity*, *Participation*, *Action* and a *Long-term Sustainability plan*.

### 3.1 Measuring Women's Empowerment in the Three Cases

This section will compare the three cases using the framework of a women's empowerment program. The five elements identified from the literature were: Access (increase resources), Capacity (Knowledge-transfer), Participation (space/ platform for mobilization), and Action (taken by women) and a Long-term Sustainability plan. The following chart illustrates how the women's empowerment projects fulfilled or did not fulfill the five elements of empowerment.

<i>Elements of an Empowerment Project</i>	<b>Peace Corps GLOW Camp</b>	<b>OSCE WRCs</b>	<b>UNFPA Combating GBV and GTG</b>
<b><i>Access</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased young girls access to resources at the Camp</li> <li>• Increased access through its follow-up activities</li> <li>• Increased access to the network of the girls through the use of social media, email and newsletters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased women’s access to resources that were available to OSCE office in Yerevan, experts, information, booklets and manuals</li> <li>• OSCE also conducted research and statistical data that is available to the WRCs and its beneficiaries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased access to information created by UNFPA: manuals, statistics, and booklets all of which were made public on their website.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Capacity</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The counselors both American and Armenian are trained before the camp and given a 80+ page handbook and curriculum with detailed instructions on how to teach the girls.</li> <li>• Camp participants learned about self-assessment, health, nutrition, sex-education, gender roles, leadership, teambuilding, tolerance classes, career planning, and environmental education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board of Directors, and staff members were trained in NGO management, financial reporting and management skills were transferred.</li> <li>• Staff was taught how to give trainings on: business workshops, how to write a business plan, computer skills and web design.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNFPA did increase the capacity of government officials and practitioners that would assist victims of DV.</li> <li>• Trainings and workshops about DV and women’s rights.</li> <li>• Round table discussions with over 40 members of Parliament were held to formulate a law against DV.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Participation and Space</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GLOW camp created a space and a network of the camp participants.</li> <li>• Allowed 60+ participants per year to participate in the camps and created a friendly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The centers created act as a space for women to network, transfer knowledge and formulate a plan for action.</li> <li>• This project created two NGOs and a foundation legitimizing a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certain aspects of this project created a space; NGOs were able to speak with Governmental ministries and MPs.</li> <li>• The forum created, and the GTG created a platform where civil</li> </ul>

	environment for these young girls to communicate, collaborate, network and become friends from all around Armenia at the camp and after the camp.	space where women could come to, work in, learn from and would not be shunned by their family or community.	society members could assist and participate in the government implementing laws regarding equal opportunities for women and a DV law, however no individuals participated in this forum.
<b><i>Action</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GLOW alumni have been extremely active once they have participated in this camp.</li> <li>• Several GLOW alumni have initiated community projects including gender training, environmental education, and career development.</li> <li>• Past participants have also participated in life-changing exchange programs and are attending Universities in Armenia and abroad.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The women running the WRCs as well as their beneficiaries implemented several projects and programs .</li> <li>• Implementing community and regional projects.</li> <li>• The staff of the three centers formed a Syunik Women’s Resource Center Network.</li> <li>• As a network they have been successful in implementing regional projects from their pooled resources.</li> </ul>	
<b><i>Long-term Sustainability</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging and establishing an alumni network to help raise money for the next GLOW camp.</li> <li>• Implementing an Alumni giving campaign was the first stage in the plan for long-term sustainability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As of 2011, the WRCs have all been successfully established as NGOs or foundations that can collect money.</li> <li>• Through activities such as Homeland Handicrafts- selling items made from the women in the centers, allows the centers to generate money to sustain their centers.</li> <li>• From a report from the</li> </ul>	

		Secretariat, OSCE has requested to headquarter on extending the project for another three years to help offset the expenses of the centers	
--	--	--	--

Sources: (Ghazaryan, 2012; Harutyunyan S., 2012; Harutyunyan T., 2012; Vardanyan, 2012; Mikayelyan, 2012; Simonyan, 2012).

## **3.2 Operationalizing Women's Empowerment**

This section will highlight the five elements of empowerment and illustrate which project or program fulfilled the particular measurement of empowerment or not. By identifying the gaps presented from the chart above will clarify which elements were missing thus translating if the project or program was successful or not in empowering women.

### **3.2.1 Access**

An increase in access was a common element in empowering women in development from the literature. An increased access to resources and information was the first step in various scholars definitions of empowerment and how it would be achieved. All the projects fulfilled requirements of increasing access to resources and information. The PC GLOW camp increased access to information on an individual level when the camp participants attended the camp and its year-long follow-up activities. The OSCEs WRCs increased access to information and resources at the local centers for the organizations themselves and for the community members. UNFPAs project increased access to information and resources by publishing its manuals, booklets and statistics online available to the public.

### **3.2.2 Capacity**

Capacity building activities through training, workshops, exchange programs were all part of a knowledge-transfer and knowledge gaining process where women were provided with information to assist in their discovery to take action. All of the projects did have capacity building within their programs. The PC GLOW project's main goal is to educate young girls. From the broad range of topics mentioned in the table all aimed at empowering girls and

enabling them to be leaders of their own lives. The OSCE WRC project trained all the individual women that were involved in the three regional centers extensively on how to run and operate an NGO in Armenia. In addition to that, the women were then trained on how to empower others within their respective communities. Trainings were then held for women in the three communities including how to write a business plan, journalism workshops and basic computer skills. The UNFPA project trained all of its participants however it was heavily aimed at governmental officials, nevertheless it did incorporate civil society members and other actors such as policemen, psychologists, and religious leaders. Including new actors is an interesting take on awareness raising and enabling the environment in combating DV in Armenia. It is apparent that capacity building is an important element in women's empowerment and all three projects have fulfilled this particular measurement.

### **3.2.3 Participation**

After analyzing the cases, majority of the cases created a space or a platform in their unique way. In the case of GLOW camp, the camp itself allowed the girls to individually mobilize. This space created by PC and SYC gave the girls a safe environment where they could express their feelings, ask questions and network with one another for future plans. Through this platform at GLOW camp, girls mobilized themselves by creating a network throughout Armenia and created plans to take action. The OSCE WRC project allowed women to utilize the centers by creating a space where women could come up with business ideas, community projects and share information. By creating actual NGOs and a Foundation in the regions allowed women in the respective communities to participate in activities that were acceptable to their families and outsiders. These centers legitimized a space where the local women

could actively participate and mobilize themselves to plan activities that they would like to implement throughout the community or region.

The UNFPA Combating GBV project at the end of its three-year project formed the GTG which created a platform for women's NGOs to communicate with government officials. Nonetheless, majority of its work focused on structural changes collaborating with government ministries and legislatures. UNFPA's top-down approach was affective in other measurements of empowerment however the limited space and limited resources that actually trickled down to the individual women from the GBV project was non-existent. Moreover, the absence of women did not provide a platform that women could utilize, there for did not effectively mobilize women to eventually take the last step of empowerment *action*. In an interview from Susanna Vardanyan, she expressed her concern of the commitment by UNFPA in addressing the real issues of DV in Armenia. "Simply drafting laws and training policemen how to assist victims of DV, is not combating DV" (Vardanyan, Susanna, Director at Women's Rights Center- Yerevan. Interview with Amanda Pascal. April 13, 2012). This correlates with what was stated before in the literature regarding IOs top-down approach and working with the structure of change and not complementing that approach by including agents of change.

### **3.2.4 Action**

The last measurement of women's empowerment is the ability to take action. Once women have resources, space, knowledge, and are mobilized, the next step is action. Two out of the three cases led to women taking action. The PC and OSCE cases both have concrete action examples of where women or girls created, mobilized and implemented projects. After

GLOW camp, girls organized follow-up activities in their villages throughout Armenia and continue to be role models for other girls in their communities. Projects include trainings on gender roles, environmental education and leadership workshops. OSCE WRCs have implemented dozens of projects at the three centers independently and as the newly created network. This project even demonstrated the step of control that Longwe developed as the ultimate level of empowerment, when a woman controls her resources and her actions. The women running the WRCs are in control of the projects they implement and the policies they adopt as WRCs. This project in Armenia has also been noted as a “best practice” in the OSCE community. This project design and implementation of the WRC within the regions is used a model for other countries OSCE works in (Harutyunyan T, 2012). These two projects complement what was argued by scholars Moser and Kabeer stating that the grassroots level is where empowerment is done best (Moser 1993; Kabeer, 1994).

The UNFPA case did not involve women per say so they did not have women taking action. There was still action taken by the government and civil society members, just not the way that this study is examining it.<sup>9</sup> The UNFPA projects were lacking participants on the individual level; the government and select civil society groups were the only beneficiaries of the top-down approach of its projects. At the GTG group meeting in April 2012, the main representative from the government was not enthusiastic about the discussion pushed from civil society groups requesting the present draft law regarding DV to be distributed before the next meeting in order for them to assist in the process (Gender Theme Group Meeting, 2012). This demonstrated that even if the actors are present it does not always translate to cooperation and action. The lack of action taken by women from this project is one indicator that explains why this is not a successful women’s empowerment program.

---

<sup>9</sup> Through the creation of the committee to combat GBV in Armenia implemented by the government and civil society member raising awareness of DV was action taken from other actors but not *women* themselves, therefore this action is not present in this case.

### 3.2.5 Long-Term Sustainability Plan

The only cases that implemented a plan of long-term sustainability were PCs GLOW camp and OSCEs WRCs. PC GLOW camp in 2009 started an alumni giving campaign targeted to past participants which communicates with them nine months before the next camp and requests them to donate to the camp that they once participated in for free. Creating a network of giving has continued and has increased over the years. This form of charitable giving is a new concept for Armenians and is now incorporated into the camp curriculum. Addressing how to make GLOW camp more sustainable in the future and continue its benefits for future generations through the network of alumni demonstrates that GLOW camp initiated a plan for long-term sustainability (Simonyan, 2012). OSCEs WRCs have a plan of long-term sustainability through establishing all of its centers into appropriate NGOs and Foundations as of 2011 that are able to generate revenue under the tax code in Armenia (Harutyunyan T., 2012). Since then, the WRCs have participated in a craft show from Homeland Handicrafts that showcases crafts and traditional Armenian food in Yerevan retail shops and hotels and are in negotiations to sell to retailers in America. Participating in revenue generating activities will lead to the centers financial independence after OSCE leaves demonstrating the centers plan for long-term sustainability. Through these economic activities the WRCs will also be able to continue to provide trainings and workshops for members of their communities (Harutyunyan S., 2012).

The UNFPA project has no plan for long-term sustainability but will continue its GTG meetings four times a year. There are limited mechanisms in place to monitor its activities in order to evaluate what progress it has made in empowering women (Vardanyan, 2012). The top-down approach is complexly intertwined with the government's agenda and is obligated

to comply with the direction it would like to go. The platform created shows little advancement in the adoption and implementation of gender equality or DV laws. The lack of a long-term sustainability plan is another indicator of why this program is not a successful women's empowerment program (Ghazaryan, 2012).

### **3.3 Summary of Findings**

Analyzing the three cases through the lens of the five elements of women's empowerment illustrated what is necessary for a project to successfully empower women. Two out of three cases fulfilled all measurements of empowerment: PC GLOW camp and OSCEs WRCs. By increasing women's access to resources and information, capacity building, participation and space, mobilized women to take action. Additionally, these projects initiated a plan for long-term sustainability that will allow the programs to continue once the IOs are gone, establishing these projects as successful women's empowerment programs. UNFPAs lack of inclusion of individuals into their project hinders its ability to mobilize women to take action. Thus making it a women's empowerment program that is not successful further exemplifying the top-down approach to women's empowerment does not truly empower women. This demonstrates the paper's main argument stating cooperation between the IO, women's NGOs and individuals is crucial in empowering women. Involving all three actors in its program is a way to effectively increase access to resources, build capacity, create space and mobilize participation and take action. Additionally adding a component of long-term sustainability for the program to continue to exist after the IO has completed the project will ensure that the program will remain a success in the future.

The participants from GLOW camp and the women at the WRCs have been empowered by these projects. However there are other factors not necessarily covered from this framework. Reports on the current projects of the three WRCs published on their websites include projects that are straying from empowering women. Some projects assist disadvantage children and environmental issues that are helpful for their communities but are different from the original mission of the program (Harutyunyan S., 2012). The PC GLOW project is successful in the fact that it fulfilled all the measurements of empowerment but from an interview with Lilit Simonyan, the 2012 GLOW camp had to be reduced due to lack of funding from grants (Simonyan, 2012). From various interviews, they said the current “hot topic” from donor organizations was projects related to the elections; parliamentary elections were this past May and next year will be the Presidential election in Armenia (Ghazaryan, 2012; Harutyunyan T., 2012; Vardanyan, 2012). The problem with relying on donor organizations to fund GLOW camp effect long-term sustainability, however efforts made by PC and SYC to incorporate alumni to donate to the project is a new and innovated way to create a sustainable camp.

This chapter analyzed the three cases using the framework on measuring a women’s empowerment project. The findings concluded that only two out of the three projects were successful and the missing link was the inclusion of individuals that was missed by the top-down approach from UNFPAs empowerment project. By not collaborating with the IO, Civil Society Groups *and* Individuals did not allow women to mobilize and then take *action*. The UNFPAs case lacked action taken from women. Additionally, the projects non –existent plan for sustainability was another indicator pointing to the programs lack of success. The proceeding section of the paper will summarize the entire study and provide

recommendations for these cases and future women's empowerment projects implemented by IOs.

## CONCLUSION

This paper examined three women's empowerment projects implemented by three IOs in Armenia. From the literature written about empowering women in development, I created a framework that analyzed the three cases. Scholars and practitioners noted that empowerment was a process and through increased access, knowledge, resources and mobilization, then women could take action in order to change their disadvantage situation. From the different frameworks on how to operationalize empowerment four key elements were highlighted: Access, Capacity, Participation, and Action. These four elements plus an element of long-term sustainability were used to measure the three cases selected for this study: PC GLOW camp, OSCEs WRCs, and UNFPAs Combating GBV in the South Caucasus' and GTG.

The last chapter compared the cases using the selected framework of empowerment and concluded that PC GLOW camp and OSCE WRC successfully fulfilled all the measurements necessary in a successful women's empowerment project. The UNFPA case was implemented by a top-down approach and did not include individuals in their projects and mainly incorporated government ministries, and NGOs. This led to the UNFPA case not fulfilling the element of mobilizing women and action in its empowerment project. This illustrated the paper's main argument that collaboration between the implementing IO, local NGOs and individuals are essential to empowering women along with having a long-term sustainability plan. Examining the analysis of the projects complements what Kabeer (1994), Moser (2003), Goetz and Sen Gupta (1996) emphasized by empowering women using a grassroots, bottom-up approach.

Further research is needed to understand the true impact of these projects. The WRCs demonstrated as a case that empowered women based on the framework however the centers are often implementing projects that are not related to empowering women, thus leading to mission creep. The issue of sustainability could be further studied to see what works best based on the specific type of empowerment these cases focused on. Additionally, different levels of empowerment were noted from these cases (individual v. collective) and further research could be analyzed to demonstrate a deeper meaning of women's empowerment between the two levels.

As a recommendation, PC GLOW camp could attempt to lobby the government to incorporate this camp into their educational system as a way to improve its long-term sustainability to help offset some of the cost and burden in finding funding every year. The OSCE WRCs could improve by having more direction from the OSCE office in Yerevan as to what type of programs they could implement, but that could lead to disempowering the women of the centers. The UNFPA project in the future should incorporate a more bottom-up approach to development and include more women's groups from the regions and individuals into their programs. Other IOs and NGOs could use this framework to see if its projects empower women by increasing their access to resources, capacity building, providing a space, mobilizing women and having women take action along with a plan of long-term sustainability, thus successfully implementing a women's empowerment program.

## **ANNEX A:**

The three cases for this study are:

- 1) Peace Corps Armenia, Girls Leading Our World (GLOW) camp in collaboration with Stepanavan Youth Center (SYC),
- 2) OSCEs Women's Resource Centers (WRCs),
- 3) UNFPA Combating Gender Based Violence (GBV) in the South Caucasus' and Gender Theme Group (GTG) working with the Women's Rights Center NGO in Yerevan

The following interviews were conducted with the IOs face-to face:

- 1) Liana Mikayelyan the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Coordinator at Peace Corps Armenia;
- 2) Tsovinar Harutyunyan Senior Programme Assistant from the OSCE Office in Yerevan;
- 3) Aida Ghazaryan the Programme Analyst at UNFPA Armenia.

E-mail interviews were conducted with Project Managers or Directors from the following organizations to illustrate local and regional NGOs perspectives regarding women's empowerment programs implemented by IOs.

- 1) SYC (Lilit Simonyan),
- 2) WRC-Meghri (Satic Harutyunyan),
- 3) Women's Rights Center NGO (Susanna Vardanyan)

## Bibliography

- "Stepanavan Youth Center." Stepanavan Youth Center. < <http://www.stepyouthcenter.org/2009.html#69>> (24 May 2012).
- "The World Fact Book- Armenia." US Central Intelligence Agency. CIA, <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/am.html>> (29 May 2012).
- "Three common gender research methodologies." 2007. United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. < <http://www.un-instraw.org/en/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1054&Itemid=>> (12 May 2012).
- Afshar, Haleh. *Women and Empowerment: Illustrations from the Third World*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- Agarwal B. 2001. UN expert group meeting on gender and poverty: some issues. United Nations <[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/empower/documents/Argarwal-EP2.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/empower/documents/Argarwal-EP2.pdf)> (18 May 2012)
- Alsop, R. and A. Norton. 2004, "Power, Rights and Poverty Reduction", in R. Alsop *Power, Rights and Poverty: Concepts and Connections*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Armenia. Parliament. Annex to the protocol No. 5 of the RA Government. Feb. 2010, *Concept Paper- Gender Policy*. < [http://www.un.am/en/Gender\\_related\\_national\\_docs](http://www.un.am/en/Gender_related_national_docs)> (24 May 2012).
- Batliwala, S.. "The meaning of women's empowerment: new concepts from action." In *Population policies reconsidered: health, empowerment, and rights*, 130-149. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, 1994.
- Bird, Kate, Cecilia Luttrell, Sitna Quiroz, Claire Scrutton. *Understanding and Operationalising Empowerment*. Overseas Development Institute. 2009. Working Paper 308. London.
- Boserup, Ester. *Woman's Role in Economic Development*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970.
- Campbell, Marie and Katherine Teghtsoonian. "Aid Effectiveness and Women's Empowerment: Practices of Governance in the Funding of International Development" *Feminists Theorize International Political Economy Special Issue*. 2010, 36, no. 1: 177-202. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/652914>> (14 May 2012).
- Carothers, Thomas "Democracy Assistance: Political versus Developmental?" *Journal of Democracy*, January 2009: 5-19
- Caubergs, Lisette and Sophie Charlier. *The Women Empowerment Approach: A methodological guide*. Brussels: Commission on Women and Development, 2007.
- Chapman, David W. and Grace A. Nkansa. "Sustaining Community Participation: What

Remains after the Money Ends?" *International Review of Education*. 52, no. 6: 509-532. [www.jstor.org/stable/29737120](http://www.jstor.org/stable/29737120) (5 June 2012).

Cornwall, A. and K. Brock, 2005. *Beyond Buzzwords: Poverty Reduction, Participation, and Empowerment in Development Policy*. Brighton, UK: IDS.

Dahl, Arthur Lyon. 1995 *Towards Indicators of Sustainability*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Environment Programme.

de Waal, Thomas. "The lightness of history in the Caucasus." *openDemocracy*. 4 Nov. 2010.. <<http://www.opendemocracy.net/thomas-de-waal/lightness-of-history-in-caucasus>> (29 May 2012).

Diamond, Larry. "The Democratic Boom," in Henry Holt, 2008, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World* pp. 39-55.

Fiedrich, M., A. Jellema, N. Haq, J. Nalwoga and F. Nessa, 2003. *Literacy, Gender and Social Agency: Adventures in Empowerment*. DFID report for ActionAid UK.

Fonjong, Tosmart. "Fostering women's participation in development through non-governmental efforts in Cameroon." *The Geographical Journal* 167, no. 3, 2001: 223-234. [www.jstor.org/stable/3060590](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3060590) (14 May 2012).

Funk, Nanette, and Magda Mueller. *Gender Politics and post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

"Gender Theme Group Meeting." UN House Yerevan. United Nations Armenia. Yerevan, Armenia. April 13, 2012.

Ghazaryan, Aida. Programme Analyst United Nations Population Fund- Armenia. Interview with Amanda Pascal. Yerevan. April 13, 2012.

Goetz, A. and R. Sen Gupta, 'Who Takes the Credit? Gender, Power and Control over Loan Use in Rural Credit Programs in Bangladesh'. *World Development* 24, no. 1, 1996: 45-63.

Goetz, Anne Marie. *Governing Women: Women's Political Effectiveness in Contexts of Democratization and Governance Reform*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Harris, Jonathan M. 2000. *Rethinking Sustainability: Power, Knowledge and Institutions*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.

Harutyunyan, Satik. Project Coordinator at Women's Resource Center- Meghri. E-mail Interview with Amanda Pascal. May 15, 2012.

Harutyunyan, Tsovinar. Senior Programme Assistant from the OSCE Office in Yerevan. Interviewed with Amanda Pascal. Yerevan. April 11, 2012.

- Huntington, Samuel. *The Third Wave*. Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1991, 1-34.
- Kabeer, Naila. Conflicts Over Credit: Re-Evaluating the Empowerment Potential of Loans to Women in Rural Bangladesh, *World Development* 29, no. 1, January 2001, Pages 63-84, <<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X00000814>> (12 May 2012).
- Kabeer, Naila. "Resources, agency, achievements: reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment." *Development and Change*, 1999, 30:435-464.
- Kabeer, Naila. *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*. London: Verso, 1994.
- Kapur, Aanchal and Nata Duvvury. *A Rights-Based Approach to Realizing the Economic and Social Rights of Poor and Marginalized Women*. 2006. International Center for Research on Women. Washington D.C.
- Longwe, Sara. "Gender Awareness: The Missing Element in the Third World Development Project." In Tina Wallace and Candida March, Eds. *Changing Perceptions: New Writings on Gender and Development*, 157-178. Oxford: Oxfam, 1995.
- Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A. Way. *Competitive Authoritarianism*, Cambridge University Press, 2010: 3-20.
- MacFarland, S. "Foreign Assistance: To What Degree has Western Aid Helped Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia?" 2006, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2011/11/29/foreign-assistance-to-what-degree-has-western-aid-helped-armenia-azerbaijan-and-georgia/854q>> (3 June 2012).
- Mikayelyan, Liana. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Coordinator at Peace Corps Armenia. Interview with Amanda Pascal. Yerevan. April 12, 2012.
- Mosedale, Sarah. "Assessing Women's Empowerment Towards a Conceptual Framework." *Journal of International Development* 17, no. 1, 2005: 243-257. [www.interscience.wiley.com](http://www.interscience.wiley.com) (15 May 2012).
- Moser, Caroline . *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice, and Training*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Mosse, D. 2005, "Power Relations and Poverty Reduction", in R. Alsop *Power, Rights and Poverty: Concepts and Connections*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Narayan, Deepa. "Executive Summary." In *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: a Sourcebook*, v-viii. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2002.
- Outshoorn, J., 1987, 'Power as a Political and Theoretical Concept in Second-Wave Feminism', in M. Leijenaar, K. Davis, J. Oldersma, C. Helleman and D. Vos (eds), *The Gender of Power: A Symposium*, Leiden: Kartens B.V.

- Peace Corps. <<http://www.peacecorps.gov/>> (12 May 2012).
- Peter Burnell, *Promoting Democracy Abroad: Policy and Performance*, 2011, 57-95.
- Rai, Shirin. *Gender and the Political Economy of Development: From Nationalism to Globalization*. Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 2002.
- Rowlands, Jo. "Empowerment Examined." *Development in Practice* 5, no. 2, 1995: 101-107. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4028929> (15 May 2012).
- Rowlands, Jo. *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras*. Oxford [England: Oxfam;], 1997.
- Sardenberg, C. M.B., 2008, Liberal vs. Liberating Empowerment: A Latin American Feminist Perspective on Conceptualizing Women's Empowerment. *IDS Bulletin*, 39: 18–27. doi: 10.1111/j.1759-5436.2008.tb00507.x (20 May 2012).
- Sen, Gita, and Karen Grown. *Development, Crisis and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspective*. New Delhi, India: DAWN, 1985.
- Silova, Iveta , and Cathryn Magno. "Gender Equality Unmasked: Democracy, Gender, and Education in Central/ Southeastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union." *Comparative Educational Review* 48, no. 4, 2004: 417-441. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/423358/> (accessed May 14, 2012).
- Simonyan, Lilit. Director of Programs at Stepanavan Youth Center. E-mail Interview with Amanda Pascal. May 15, 2012.
- The Legal Approach to International Development” 2011. White Paper. Haki Legal Empowerment Network. <<http://www.hakinetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Haki-Legal-Empowerment-White-Paper.pdf>> (18 May 2012).
- Tinker, Irene. "A Context for the field and for the Book." In *Persistent inequalities: women and world development*, 3-13. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- UN Women. 28 March 2012. “Raising Gender on the Global Development Agenda.” <<http://www.unwomen.org/2012/03/raising-gender-on-the-global-development-agenda/>> (3 May 2012).
- UNDP. 2012, “Human Development Profiles.” < <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/profiles/>> (25 May 2012).
- United Nations of Armenia. “UN Expanded Theme Group on Gender in Armenia Work Plan 2010-2011” <[http://www.un.am/en/Gender\\_Theme\\_Group](http://www.un.am/en/Gender_Theme_Group)> (24 May 2012).
- United Nations. 1995. *The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action: Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995*. New York: Dept. of Public Information. *Harvard Library Bibliographic Dataset*, EBSCOhost (21 May 2012).

- United Nations-a. "Combating Gender Based Violence in the South Caucasus Project in Armenia." Combating Gender Based Violence in the South Caucasus Project in Armenia. <<http://www.genderbasedviolence.am/en>> (May 24, 2012).
- United Nations-b. "GENDER THEME GROUP IN ARMENIA." Combating Gender Based Violence in the South Caucasus Project in Armenia. <<http://www.genderbasedviolence.am/en/content/show/121/gender-theme-group-in-armenia.html>> (May 24, 2012).
- United Nations. 2004, "Member States Responses to the Questionnaire on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action: Armenia." United Nations. <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/responses.htm>> (10 May 2012).
- Vardanyan, Susanna, Director at Women's Rights Center- Yerevan. Interview with Amanda Pascal. April 13, 2012
- Warren, Hannah. "Using Gender Analysis Frameworks: Theoretical and Practical Reflections." *Gender and Development* 15, no. 2 2007: 187-198. [www.jstor.org/stable/20461200](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20461200) (18 May 2012).
- WikiLeaks. 2006, *06YEREVAN174: "WHO'S WHO" IN ASSISTANCE FUNDING TO ARMENIA*. Leak Overflow: Wikileaks Cables. <<http://www.leakoverflow.com/questions/401008/06yerevan174-whos-who-in-assistance-funding-to-armenia>> (10 May 2012).
- Wistrand, Birgitta and Armine Mkhitarian. 2007. *Women Empowerment and Cooperation in Armenia with a focus on the Syunik region*, Assessment report prepared for OSCE Office in Yerevan.
- World Bank, 2001. "What is Empowerment?" World Development Report 2000/2001 – Attacking Poverty. <<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/>> (27 May 2012).
- World Bank, 1999, "The Gender Dimension of Development", in *The World Bank Operational Manual: Operational Policies* <<http://www.worldbank.org>> (27 May 2012).