

**Perceptions of Empowerment and Power in
Community Development Programs**
Case Study of Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF EMPOWERMENT AND POWER IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS – Case Study of Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service

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The purpose of the present case study is to examine the local understandings and experiences of community empowerment, especially in terms of the perceived changes and the evolving power relations triggered by the empowerment intervention, in the context of the Tanzanian NGO Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service. Furthermore, on a more general level, the aim of the study is to look into the possibilities of the empowerment approach to reduce the striking inequalities in the Sub-Saharan African countries, offering them a more sustainable way out of poverty.

The data was collected during an internship in the study context in Tanzania in the summer of 2013, the secondary data consisting of official documents and reports provided by the NGO; the primary data consisting of 15 qualitative interviews conducted with the staff and the community members. Phenomenological hermeneutic approach was chosen as the data analysis methods, enabling the in-depth comprehension of the abstract and complex phenomenon of empowerment.

The findings indicate that the empowerment resulting from the program intervention is to a large extent genuine and sustainable, affecting also the internal power relations of the community. An empowered community is an independent, active, equal and harmonious collective with all the possibilities to develop further and reach prosperity. The empowerment approach has, indeed, a lot of potential as a sustainable way out of poverty, as long as it is genuine, emerging from within the individuals and the collective.

Keywords: empowerment, power, community, development, Tanzania

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	6
1. INTRODUCTION	7
1.1. Aim of the Study.....	7
1.2. Key Concepts.....	8
1.3. Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service.....	9
1.4. Structure of the Study.....	10
2. TANZANIA – HISTORY, SOCIETY AND CIVIL SOCIETY	11
2.1.1. History	12
2.1.2. Society.....	13
2.1.3. Economy.....	14
2.1.4. Poverty.....	15
2.1.5. Civil Society.....	17
3. EMPOWERMENT	20
3.1. Definitions of Empowerment in Different Disciplines.....	20
3.2. Community Empowerment.....	23
3.3. The Concept of Power in Empowerment.....	25
3.4. Problematic in the Study of Empowerment.....	28
3.5. Significance of the Study and Research Questions.....	30
3.5.1. Research Questions.....	30
4. METHODOLOGY.....	32
4.1. Choice of Methods: Qualitative Case Study	32
4.2. Introduction to the Case: TCRS	34
4.3. Data Collection.....	37
4.4. Data Analysis.....	38
4.5. Limitations and Ethical Considerations of the Study	41
5. FINDINGS 1 – EMPOWERMENT AS INTERVENTION: PROGRAM GOALS AND PERCEIVED CHANGE.....	44
5.1. Community Empowerment Programs	44
5.1.1. Generalities	44
5.1.2. Definitions of Community	45
5.1.3. Target Groups: Who is to be Empowered?	45
5.1.4. Objectives and Principles	46
5.1.5. Practices and Activities	48
5.2. Changes Triggered by the CEPs	50
5.2.1. Direct Experiences of the Community Members.....	50
5.2.2. Changes Reported by the Staff.....	54
5.2.3. Non-Material Changes	55

5.2.4.	Changes in the Leadership	57
5.2.5.	Changes in the Collective	58
5.2.6.	Changes as Components or Catalysts of Empowerment	60
6.	FINDINGS 2 – CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT BEHIND THE INTERVENTION	61
6.1.	Indicators of Empowerment	61
6.2.	Genuine Understanding of Empowerment.....	62
6.3.	Characteristics of an Empowered Individual	66
6.4.	Characteristics of an Empowered Community	68
6.5.	TCRS’s Role in the Process of Empowerment	72
6.6.	Sustainability	74
6.7.	Conditions for Empowerment.....	77
6.7.1.	Strategies for Empowerment.....	79
6.8.	Empowerment Obstacles	81
7.	FINDINGS 3 – POWER RELATIONS AND EMPOWERMENT	85
7.1.	Power Relations in the Community before and after Empowerment	85
7.1.1.	Power Relations between the Community Leaders and the Community Members	86
7.1.2.	Power Relations between the Marginalized and the Rest of the Community.....	87
7.1.3.	Power Relations between Men and Women	88
7.2.	Power in Empowerment.....	91
7.2.1.	Sources of Power	91
7.2.2.	Circularity of Power and Empowerment.....	94
8.	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	96
8.1.	Changes Resulting from Empowerment.....	96
8.2.	Essence of Empowerment.....	98
8.2.1.	Conditions and Obstacles of Empowerment.....	99
8.2.2.	Genuine and Instrumental Empowerment.....	100
8.3.	Changes in the Power Relations as a Result of Empowerment	101
8.3.1.	Sources of Power	102
8.4.	Empowerment as a Development Approach.....	103
8.5.	Concluding Remarks and Further Research	104
	REFERENCES.....	106
	APPENDICES.....	114
	Appendix I.....	114
	Appendix II	117

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CCM	<i>Chama cha Mapinduzi</i> (Party of the Revolution)
CEP	Community Empowerment Program
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EVGs	Extremely Vulnerable Groups
FBO	Faith-Based Organization
FELM	Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGA	Income Generating Activity
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LWF/DWS	Lutheran World Federation / Department for World Service
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSGRP	National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty
PETS	Public Expenditure Tracking Survey
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
TCRS	Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VICOBA	Village Community Bank
WB	World Bank

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Aim of the Study

As a student of international development cooperation, I have a genuine interest in finding ways to make the world a more equal place. In particular, I find the unequal position of Sub-Saharan Africa compared to many better off economies and areas in the world exceptionally striking and appalling.

Despite the fact that the activities and projects of international development cooperation have been going on for many decades already, many countries in Africa are still lagging behind in what we define as ‘development’. Clearly, the applied efforts of the development cooperation have not proved to be efficient, and there is therefore an urgent need to find new approaches to tackle the global inequalities. One of these rather recently discovered approaches could be the idea of *empowerment*. Instead of the earlier focus on merely economic development, could *empowerment* contribute to building up equality, wealth and prosperity for these countries in a more sustainable way?

Problematic with the concept of empowerment is the fact that it is very abstract, context-dependent and rather difficult, if not impossible, to measure in traditionally used quantitative means. Therefore, the more information on empowerment practices and activities is brought into light, the more the general understanding of empowerment will increase, aiming at expanding the “ideology of empowerment” in the future efforts to help these developing countries to rise out of poverty.

Inspired by the above ideas, the aim of the present study is therefore to look into the concept of empowerment in a specific context, that of the development organization *Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service* in the Eastern African country of Tanzania, and more specifically its *Community Empowerment Programs* aiming to bring development in the poor communities all over Tanzania. The study

aspires therefore to bring about more information on empowerment, especially on its collective aspects, as well as to analyze the current state of the empowerment activities of the organization in question, in an effort to contribute to their longevity and sustainability.

1.2. Key Concepts

The present study will be structured focusing on a few key concepts that will serve to guide the course of the analysis throughout the research. Case study, the present research will not aim at offering an all-encompassing, universally valid definition or an exhaustive theoretic examination of the concepts, but rather to look into their manifestation, particularities and interpretations in a specific context. To have a solid, academic basis for the present analysis, the concepts shall, however, be examined in essence by looking into some of the earlier research and analyses, paying special regard to whatever potential difficulties and singularities arisen.

Thus, the main object of the study will be the concept of *empowerment*, with a specific emphasis on its *communal* aspects. One of the key terms associated with empowerment, namely *power*, will also be examined further in the theoretical part of this study in order to better understand the complexity of the concept of *empowerment* itself. Power and empowerment are, in fact, so closely related, that it can be questioned if it is relevant to try and distinguish between them. In the following, I shall provide definitions for the three concepts central to my analysis, which shall be further elaborated in the theoretical chapter.

Empowerment, complex phenomenon having no single clear definition, has previously been referred to as e.g. *internal feeling of power* (Siitonen 2000); *becoming able to work towards helping oneself and others to maximize the quality of their lives* (Adams 2003); *a combination of self-acceptance and self-confidence, social and political understanding, having a say in decision-making and control of resources* (Eklund 1999); *regaining the ability to make strategic life choices* (Kabeer 2001). In this study, I shall define empowerment as **increased self-**

awareness and internal feeling of power resulting in the pursuit of enhanced abilities for increasing personal and collective well-being (e.g. Swai 2010, Eklund 1999, Siitonen 1999, Kabeer 2001, Järvinen 2007, Adams 2003). However, the study shall focus especially on how the NGO actors and the villagers themselves perceive empowerment, as well as on how these different perceptions compare to previous definitions of empowerment.

Community is a group of individuals living in the same geographical area, having the same (ethnic) origin or similar occupation, often characterized by a strong sense of identity, shared values and norms, common symbol systems, such as language and rituals as well as common history and experiences. A community can have one or several of the above characteristics, and the definitions of a community can vary largely in different contexts (United Republic of Tanzania 1996, Israel et al. 1994). In this study, I shall use the concept of community to refer to a village setting, consisting of a group of individuals sharing common interests, values and norms.

Power, the root of empowerment, is an abstract concept lacking a specific definition. Essentially, power refers to the ability to make a difference (e.g. Lukes 1986). According to some theorists (cf. e.g. Bech Dyrberg 1997), this ability is both the cause and effect of power, whereby power can be seen to be characterized by a circular structure: the becoming of identity shaped by the ability to make a difference. Power is thus an open-ended possibility immanent and manifested in action. For my study, the concept of power as the ability to make a difference, an inseparable part of empowerment, is the most relevant.

1.3. Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service

The present research is a case study of Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS), a Tanzanian national NGO established in 1964 initially serving as a humanitarian and emergency relief organization, later shifting its focus on development work with a special emphasis on the *empowerment* approach. TCRS was founded as a result of an agreement signed by the Government of the

Republic of Tanganyika and the Lutheran World Federation Department for World Service (LWF/DWS), being the first LWF field program in Africa. In 2006, TCRS became an autonomous Tanzanian-registered organization, still, however, retaining strong relations with the LWF/DWS as its Associate Field Program. Therefore, in all its approaches, TCRS follows the guidelines of its parent organization LWF/DWS, where the focus on empowerment also originates from.

1.4. Structure of the Study

This first, introductory chapter will be followed by a chapter presenting briefly the context of the study, the United Republic of Tanzania, from its early years to the present day, examining the economic as well as the societal aspects. The third chapter looks more closely into the concept of *empowerment*, setting it in a theoretical framework by regarding some of the earlier studies. The fourth chapter will present the methods of the study, from data collection to data analysis, while the results of the actual data analysis will be presented in three separate chapters (5, 6 and 7). The results will be further discussed and summarized in the eighth, concluding chapter of the present research.

2. TANZANIA – HISTORY, SOCIETY AND CIVIL SOCIETY

United Republic of Tanzania (*Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania*) is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. Tanzania, the largest country in East Africa, is located by the Indian Ocean, sharing borders with eight countries, among which Kenya and Uganda to the north, and Mozambique and Zambia to the south (United Republic of Tanzania 2013).

The politically relatively stable Tanzania prides in an abundance of natural resources and is renowned for its rich wildlife and unique tourist attractions: Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa; the paradisiac island of Zanzibar; several national parks and game reserves, among which the Serengeti natural park and the Ngorongoro conservation area with Olduvai Gorge, one of the most important paleoanthropological sites in the world¹. The capital city of Tanzania is Dodoma since the 1970s (Daily News 2013), Dar es Salaam being nonetheless to date the major commercial city.

Tanzania has four folded its population since the independence in the 1960s and has currently an estimated population of 49 million (*CIA Factbook* 2014), 80% of which living in the rural areas, largely dependent on subsistence agriculture. The extremely heterogeneous population consists of over 150 different ethnic groups with over 120 different languages. However, the national language and *lingua franca* Kiswahili, spoken by the majority of the population, serves as a unifier between the ethnic groups and ties the population together. The second official language English serves as the language of official communication, language of the court and technology, and is mainly used only by the population of a higher level of education (United Republic of Tanzania 2013; Ewald 2011). Besides the numerous ethnicities, the population is diverse also in terms of religion: 30 % of

¹ Tanzania and more specifically the archaeological site Olduvai Gorge is sometimes referred to as the “Cradle of Mankind”, as it is the location where the remains of probably the earliest human were found (Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority n.d.).

the population in the mainland of Tanzania is Christian and 30 % Muslim, while 35 % practices indigenous beliefs (*CIA Factbook* 2014). Despite the lack of homogeneity in the population, Tanzania has managed to maintain stability and build nationhood among the different ethnic and religious groups.

2.1.1. History

The modern history of the United Republic of Tanzania dates back to the 18th century when the East African coast was joined to the Sultanate of Oman, at that time also controlling the island of Zanzibar. During the 19th century, the German colonizers took over the mainland of the present United Republic of Tanzania, back then known as Tanganyika, and the German East Africa was established in 1897. The German rule lasted until the end of the First World War, after which Great Britain was mandated by the League of Nations to govern Tanganyika (United Republic of Tanzania 2013).

In 1954, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) promoting African nationalism and campaigning for independence was founded by a local schoolteacher Julius Nyerere. TANU won a major popularity, which resulted in constitutional changes by the colonizing authorities, increasing the voices of the indigenous population, and finally in elections in 1958 and 1960. The elections were a success for TANU, at that time campaigning for independence. Consequently, Tanganyika gained full independence from Britain in December 1961. Zanzibar followed suit and achieved independence in 1963, however as a separate and sovereign country, still formally remaining under the Omani rule (United Republic of Tanzania 2013).

One year after being declared independent, in 1962, Tanganyika became a republic, with TANU's leader Julius Nyerere as the first president. In the meantime, the Sultan of Zanzibar was overthrown in a revolution, and the island became an independent republic in 1964. Later in the same year, on the 26th of April 1964, the two sovereign states of Tanganyika and Zanzibar were united, and the United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, later renamed as the present *United Republic of Tanzania*, was born. Julius Nyerere became the first

president of the united republic, with the president of Zanzibar, Abeid Amani Karume as the Vice President (United Republic of Tanzania 2013).

In 1977, as a result of the union of the two republics, TANU and the Zanzibari Afro-Shirazi party came to form *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (CCM), becoming the one and only party in a single-party political system. CCM has been the ruling party in Tanzania since then, despite the introduction of a multiparty political system in 1992, the first election being held in 1995. In the fourth multiparty election in 2010, the current president of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, started his second term (United Republic of Tanzania 2013; Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2012). Where most of its neighbors have been devastated by conflicts, Tanzania has managed to develop and maintain a respectable level of political stability.

2.1.2. Society

Political stability can be considered as one of the assets of Tanzania. In the context of East African countries, United Republic of Tanzania stands out with regard to relatively democratic governance, strong national identity, respect of civil liberties and political rights, as well as freedom of press, speech and religion. However, Tanzania still faces many challenges and areas of improvement, such as weak accountability and transparency of institutions, leading to the prevalence of corruption, low educational quality and undeveloped infrastructure (Ewald 2011; African Development Bank & African Development Fund 2011).

Since its independence, Tanzania has been fighting against corruption, which has, however, spread to all sectors of society. Both small-scale and grand corruption persists, and there is a lack of systematic monitoring and reporting of corruption in the country (African Development Bank & African Development Fund 2011). According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (2014), on the scale of 0 ('highly corrupt') to 100 ('very clean'), Tanzania scored 33 points and was ranked 111 out of 177 countries, being ahead of its neighbors Kenya (136/177), Uganda (140/177) and Mozambique (119/177). As Ewald

(2011) rightly argues, corruption undermines the legitimacy of government, democratic values, and trust. For the further development of the country and its institutions, it is imperative to curb the corruption problem by e.g. strengthening the citizens' capacities to participate in the democracy and decision-making.

2.1.3. Economy

As a result of a series of reforms undertaken in the late 1980s, led by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and triggered by the economic downturn in the 1970s, the Tanzanian economy was transformed from state controlled to market based, liberalizing the economic activities. Consequently, Tanzania was able to achieve significant average annual GDP growth levels of up to 7 % between the years 2005 and 2008 (United Republic of Tanzania 2013; International Monetary Fund 2009; Ewald 2011; African Development Bank Group 2006).

For several years now, Tanzania has managed to maintain macro-economic stability, with the latest annual GDP growth reaching 6.9 % (World Bank 2013). The main sectors of the economy are agriculture and services, the former still employing up to 80 % of the population. Owing to its breathtaking landscapes and rich natural resources, Tanzania has a large growth potential also in the sectors of tourism and mining (United Republic of Tanzania 2010; African Development Bank & African Development Fund 2011). As a result of its stable growth levels, Tanzania has been praised by the international donors as one of the best performing African countries. Indeed, Tanzania was also one of the first countries to be rewarded with a reduction of its debts via the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative by the World Bank (WB) in 2000 (Ewald 2011).

However, despite the remarkable achievements at the macro level, the economic growth is fragmented and heterogeneous: the increased economic growth has not trickled down to significantly improve the lives of the majority of the population. On the contrary, the number of the poor has even increased (Ewald 2011; African Development Bank & African Development Fund 2011). Tanzania urgently needs to find ways to transform the growth more sustainable and

inclusive, in order to reduce the still alarmingly high levels of poverty of its – particularly rural – population.

2.1.4. Poverty

Despite the noteworthy achievements in terms of economic growth discussed in the previous sub-chapter, poverty continues to afflict a large majority of the Tanzanian population. Indeed, Tanzania is considered as one of the poorest countries in the world (e.g. Narayan 1997, *UNDP* 2013, Ewald 2011, Ådahl 2007). According to the UNDP, Tanzania's most recent Human Development Index² value was 0.476, placing it at 152 out of 187 countries. Compared to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Tanzania was slightly above the average (0.475), yet still categorized among the countries in the low human development group (*UNDP* 2013). Moreover, according to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)³ by the UNDP, 65.6 % of the Tanzanian population were living in multiple deprivations in education, health, and standard of living (*UNDP* 2013).

Poverty manifests in many ways: low life expectancy, poor health and vulnerability to infectious diseases, high infant and maternal mortality, high unemployment levels, low literacy levels, malnutrition, etc. In Tanzania, life expectancy at birth for female and male population is 62 and 59 years respectively, while infant mortality rate is 43.7 deaths per every 1000 live births (*CIA Factbook* 2014). Malnutrition is the single biggest contributor to child mortality, and it has also been suggested to be the most important impediment to further economic growth (United Republic of Tanzania 2010).

Poverty reduction has been on the agenda of the Tanzanian government for decades. Indeed, Tanzania has been striving to reduce poverty levels with a series of development and growth strategies. *The Tanzania Development Vision 2025* from 1999 emphasizes the importance of an active, participating, well-

² “The HDI is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living” (*UNDP* 2013).

³ “[T]he Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) [...] identifies multiple deprivations in the same households in education, health and standard of living” (*UNDP* 2013).

educated and learning population with strong attitudes of self-development, as well as empowered local communities and governments committed to development. The strategy envisions a Tanzania with high quality livelihood; peace, stability and unity; good governance; a well-educated society as well as a competitive economy producing sustainable growth (United Republic of Tanzania 1999). The second *National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP II)* from 2010 for its part strongly promotes the betterment of infrastructure, good governance and accountability as well as the empowerment and participation of the population in the development (United Republic of Tanzania 2010).

As Jerve & Ofsted (2000) observe, to achieve a significant reduction in poverty, a sustained and broad-based economic growth is of utmost importance. Acknowledged in many of the national development strategies (e.g. United Republic of Tanzania 1999), agriculture is the backbone of the economy of Tanzania, and therefore the modernization and growth in the agricultural sector are crucial for the increased overall growth of the economy. However, agricultural development alone will not be enough to eradicate poverty: it is impossible that agriculture will continue to employ up to 80 % of the population also in the future. Indeed, as the agricultural productivity increases, the land area remaining the same, it will automatically create surplus labor. It is imperative to avoid the surplus to become landless casual labor or unemployed, or the poverty will not be reduced – it will only change character. Therefore, other sectors of the economy must grow as well, to “absorb the surplus”, to bring employment to the population and to avoid the growth of urban poverty. Owing to the rich natural resources of the country, mining, light industry and tourism are probably the sectors with the most short- and long-term growth potential. An effective and sustainable reduction in poverty requires more concrete policies and a long-term strategy also including improved governance and empowerment of the poor (Jerve & Ofsted 2000).

2.1.5. Civil Society

The civil society sector, groups of people who come together to fulfill the interest of members or of the general public (Aga Khan Development Network n.d.) including e.g. NGOs, voluntary and self-help groups, faith-based organizations (FBOs), grass-root initiatives and other not-for-profit organizations, is still relatively young and unorganized in Tanzania⁴, yet the need is explicit specifically in terms of service provision and advocacy for the general public.

The state has been rather suspicious towards the civil society sector, considering the voluntary organizations as a threat: on the one hand to the political order, consequently denying them the right to any political activity; and on the other hand as competitors of donor funding. Recently, however, more space has been given to the civil society organizations (CSOs), as the state has accepted them as equal partners in development. However, all civil society organizations are still under strict control of the state, in the form of different laws concerning e.g. the registration of the NGOs. The participation is often restricted, and not enough and appropriate information is being communicated by the state to the CSOs. (Aga Khan Development Network 2007, Haapanen 2007). Moreover, as the government gives no financial support or subsidies for the CSOs, most of them are forced to rely on foreign donations, being thus heavily donor-dependent, often struggling with scarce resources (Aga Khan Development Network 2007, Haapanen 2007, Manara 2009, Ådahl 2007).

According to Igoe (2003), with the proliferation and emergence of numerous new not-for-profit organizations a few decades ago, the civil society of Tanzania experienced what can be called “NGOization”, where many of the informal grass-root initiatives transformed into an array of formal NGOs. The rise of the NGOs, slavishly following the demands of the donors, actually took such a large place in

⁴ The first steps taken towards a multi-party democracy, as well as with the launch of state liberalization and structural adjustment programs in the 1980s, the civil society sector experienced an era of bloom, as innumerable new not-for-profit organizations started to emerge in Tanzania. This was triggered by e.g. the need to fill the gap caused by state withdrawal from service delivery, as well as by the need for specific social groups, such as women, to organize themselves (Haapanen 2007, Manara 2009).

the nascent civil society sector that the formation of the civil society by the genuinely community-born grass-root initiatives was undermined. Indeed, the sudden fortune and a change in the lifestyles of a number of the NGO leaders was pointing to a strikingly uneven distribution of the donor funds in a shift of donor money away from the state to the NGO sector. The NGO leaders, blinded by the prospective foreign funds, were encouraged to modify their organizations according to the Western standards, and to adapt to the sometimes unrealistic demands and conditions of the donors, often ignorant of the actual historical and societal context of the location of the NGOs. This led to a situation of patron-client networks, where the donor funds were only benefiting a small number of people within a closed circle, instead of going to the benefit of the entire community. Critical voices were demanding for more genuine participation, for more sharing of the power as well as for democratic participation in the activities practiced by the donor-led NGOs. In fact, it was not rare to see several water projects for “women’s empowerment” in the same location, where, in fact, women were only participating in the lack of other viable options, and where the benefits were actually accumulating to the male NGO leaders. Despite the increasingly common emphasis on community participation, the attitudes of many of the donors are still fitted for a top-down approach to development. On the part of the NGOs, more effort and time is spent on meeting the donor requirements than actually empowering local communities. (Igoe 2003)

Clearly, the situation is not sustainable. What is urgently needed is a sincere interest and commitment to genuine participation of the local communities. It is important to demand for more flexible donor requirements, genuine accountability to the communities, and to outline a locally planned funding strategy. An effective and sustainable civil society can only emerge if based on community initiatives (Aga Khan Development Network 2007, Haapanen 2007, Igoe 2003, Manara 2009, Ådahl 2007).

Thus, it is of utmost importance for the sustainability and continuation of the activities of the Tanzanian civil society to reduce the donor dependency to the minimum. To be able to engage whole-heartedly in the development agendas

defined by the local communities themselves, it is essential to create independent resources for funding. It is therefore necessary to awaken the grass-root level, to genuinely empower the citizens to actively participate in the initiatives and development of the civil society sector, to take full ownership of the CSOs and their projects, aiming at genuine improvement of the well-being of the local population. This is also one of the aims and objectives of the strategy of TCRS and its Community Empowerment Programs.

3. EMPOWERMENT

3.1. Definitions of Empowerment in Different Disciplines

During the past few decades, the interest in *empowerment* has increased in the academic discourse across disciplines, as well as in various fields in practice. *Empowerment* is a complex phenomenon, and as a concept, it has a variety of emphases and nuances depending on the perspectives of the field. To date, there is therefore no single, commonly agreed definition for the concept. In fact, due to its variant nature, it is considered impossible to even have a final, 'authoritative' definition for *empowerment* (e.g. Adams 2003). Therefore, it is sometimes argued (Czuba 1999, Batliwala 2007) that it risks to become yet another development buzzword lacking a deeper meaning. In fact, the definitions and perceptions of *empowerment* are always context-bound and subjective, depending on the interpretations given to it (e.g. Järvinen 2007, Eklund 1999, Swai 2010).

Used in a number of fields such as psychology, education, public health, social anthropology and increasingly also by many development agencies, *empowerment* has various definitions. To identify all the possible definitions of empowerment present in the literature would require years of examination, and would be at any rate out of scope of the purposes of this study. To have a solid academic basis for the research, it is, however, important to present a few of the most relevant interpretations of the concept. The following empowerment theorists were chosen to represent a variety of disciplines engaged in the study of empowerment, each having slightly different nuances and emphases in their understanding of empowerment. While the first three theorists target their focus especially on the idea of *inner strength* and *control* of the *individual*, the latter two present views more oriented to *collectives* and *structures* respectively.

In the field of **Public Health**, Barbara A. Israel et al. (1994) refer to *empowerment* as a process of gaining understanding and control over one's life. As a result of this process, the individuals have the ability and competence to take action to improve their life situation. Empowerment can be seen both as a process and as an outcome; cf. the state of *being empowered* as an outcome of the process of *becoming empowered*. Empowerment can have different levels, such as individual, organizational and community levels. In terms of the individual level, it has similarities with the concepts of self-efficacy and self-esteem in its development of personal competence and a critical understanding of the social and political context, leading to the cultivation of resources and skills for social action. Emphasized in Israel et al.'s definition are essentially personal control and the consequent competence to act, suggesting a rather dynamic nature for the concept.

Representing the field of **Social Work**, Dr. Elisheva Sadan (2004) brings an interesting contribution to the empowerment literature by considering *empowerment* as a kind of energy or potential naturally existing in each individual, the form and direction of which being determined by the local circumstances and the events. Sadan sees *empowerment* as a process of transition from a passive state of powerlessness to an active state of having more control over one's life, fate, and environment. The empowerment process results in self-acceptance and self-confidence, critical consciousness and social and political understanding, as well as a personal ability to take action and control. Dynamic process, empowerment has no final state; rather, it is a continuing process strengthening the capacity of the individuals to act for a change.

The viewpoint of the discipline of **Education** is brought about by Tomi Järvinen (2007), according to whom the key to empowerment in the context of development initiatives by external agencies is investment in people: capacity-building, awareness creation, promoting values and attitude change – building up motivation for change. In addition, as empowerment is a context-dependent phenomenon, it is crucial to focus on the local assets and build on the local resources and leadership, to avoid external dependency. Empowerment

demands long-term commitment, and is built on dialogue, trust, and a supportive, encouraging atmosphere. On the contrary, factors inhibiting empowerment include governmental instability, power struggles and other politico-cultural tensions; lack of good leadership, external dependency and a sense of outward control; poor communication and distrust; unrealistic plans and inadequate participation; ethical factors such as corruption, as well as cultural factors such as old beliefs and traditions (cf. witchcraft). Mainly a motivational and volitional construct, Järvinen underlines the importance of life-long learning and genuine commitment as significant contributors in the process of empowerment.

According to one of the most prominent theorists of empowerment in the field of **Community Psychology**, Julien Rappaport (1981), *empowerment* is substantially related to enhancing the possibilities for people to control their own lives. Empowerment requires collaboration and a bottom-up approach instead of centralized institutions and top-down decisions. Empowerment has as many faces as there are different social contexts and different problems, diversity of form being one of the symbols of genuine empowerment.

The distinguished theorist in the **Development Studies** Naila Kabeer (2001; p. 19), for her part, defines *empowerment* as a process of social change, “expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them”. Kabeer emphasizes thus the state of disempowerment as a prerequisite and starting point for empowerment. For *empowerment* to be meaningful and sustainable, it shall occur both on the individual and structural level, one way or other changing the institutional rules and resources as well as relations of class or gender, in addition to the changes in the individual agency, resources and achievements.

As we have seen, empowerment has a multitude of definitions, all varying according to the discipline and the numerous theorists. On a general note, the multifaceted, non-static and non-stable phenomenon of empowerment is seen as a long-term process of change or transformational activity created in the human mind, with an open ending, having many levels and dimensions, and therefore

difficult to measure by quantitative means (e.g. Kabeer 2001, Adams 2003, Eklund 1999). Synthesising the definitions and emphases of the previous studies, *empowerment* can be defined as ***increased self-awareness and internal feeling of power resulting in the pursuit of enhanced abilities for increasing personal and collective well-being*** (e.g. Swai 2010, Eklund 1999, Siitonen 1999, Kabeer 2001, Järvinen 2007, Adams 2003).

3.2. Community Empowerment

While it is difficult to give an all-embracing definition for the concept due to the increasingly changing lifestyles resulting from immigration and intermingling, a *community* can be considered as a group of people either of the same origin, living in the same area or having similar occupations – or a combination of several of these features (United Republic of Tanzania 1996). Moreover, as defined by Israel et al. (1994), a community can also be characterized by a strong sense of identity and belonging (membership); common symbol systems (language, rituals and ceremonies); shared values and norms; mutual influence between the community members; as well as shared needs and a shared emotional connection (common history and experiences). The definition of *community* shall in this study be limited to the above examples, not therefore further elaborating or taking a stance on the wide discussion on the concept of community in the fields of sociology and anthropology.

Community empowerment, most certainly not any less complex than the concept of empowerment itself, is a collective form, dimension, level or stage of individual empowerment. Empowerment theorists have outlined the characteristics of an empowered community as follows: in an (ideal) empowered community, the individuals are able to apply their acquired skills in a collective effort to meet their common needs and provide support for each other. As a result of raised individual empowerment, the community members have the ability to identify problems and solutions for them within the collective and to critically analyze the context and the world in general. There is an increased and more equal participation in the community activities and a more equal distribution of the resources. All in all, the community members feel to be more

in control over the quality of life in the collective (Eklund 1999, Israel et al. 1994, Sadan 2004).

Crucial prerequisite for this kind of empowerment is the increased *participation* in collective action, considered fundamental for the successful redistribution of resources, which in turn is required before a community can become empowered. Indeed, it is by participation that the communities learn new skills and develop their problem solving capacity (Eklund 1999).

In addition to *participation*, another essential concept linked with community empowerment is the *sense of community*, which works as a catalyst to both increased participation and better problem-solving skills. Thus, community empowerment is built on three cornerstones: 1) personal development of the individuals, 2) groups of individuals comprising a community which grows together 3) social infrastructure changed to enable and support empowerment (Eklund 1999).

Individual and collective levels of empowerment are strongly linked with each other (Eklund 1999, Israel et al. 1994). It is assumed that community empowerment is not possible without individual empowerment and an “alliance” between the empowered individuals (“us-feeling”). As Sadan (2004; p. 81) rightly puts it, community empowerment means “*coming out from the limited boundaries of the I into the expanse of possibilities of the we*”. As empowerment cannot be an individual phenomenon, the components or levels of empowerment cannot be separated from each other but require interaction. Not all the individuals of the community, however, have to be empowered to the same extent: “*as the empowerment is a group phenomenon, it is the cumulated sum of empowerment existing or prevailing in the group that constitutes community empowerment*” (Eklund 1999; p. 149).

3.3. The Concept of Power in Empowerment

According to many of the theorists of empowerment (cf. e.g. Adams 2003, Czuba 1999, Cruikshank 1999, Eklund 1999, Sadan 2004), the key concept in understanding empowerment is *power*. Indeed, already the word *empowerment* itself includes the word *power*, from which it has been derived (Denham Lincoln et al. 1999). Moreover, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the verb *empower* means to “Give (someone) the authority or **power** to do something” (Oxford University Press 2014; s.v. ‘empower’, emphasis added). It shall, however, be noted that as the concept empowerment has lost some of its earlier eminence due to the wide abuse – by, among others, the development agencies – turning it into a buzzword empty of meaning, some critical voices suggest reconsidering the position and the previously high significance laid on the concept of power as a determinant of empowerment⁵ (Batliwa 2007, Mosedale 2005).

The concept of power has been widely studied in social sciences; yet, which, as the concept of empowerment, lacks a commonly agreed specific definition and a comprehensive conceptual framework (Parsons 1986; Goldman 1986). *Power* refers essentially to the capacity or ability to make a difference, whether it was to another person’s behavior, or on a more general level to the world (e.g. Lukes 1986). Indeed, according to the late political scientist Robert A. Dahl, power, in its simplest definition, is a relation between people: “*A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do*” (Dahl 1957; p. 202-203). In other words, power is the ability to make somebody do something that they otherwise would not have done (Sadan 2004).

Power can appear on several levels, ranging from individual to collective levels. Indeed, as Goldman (1986) rightly argues, it is possible that two individuals

⁵ “There is a danger of the term empowerment becoming a buzzword within certain circles in development policy and practice of its being used to add glamour (rather than value) to interventions which actually seek to achieve a variety of economic and social outcomes, which, though they may be extremely desirable in themselves, do not necessarily challenge existing patterns of power” (Mosedale 2005; p.252).

together have power, even if they as separate individuals did not have individual power. In fact, according to Arendt (1986; p. 64), power is never the property of an individual. Power belongs to a group, and it is the group that gives someone power: “when we say of somebody that he is ‘in power’, we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name”. Power emerges from collectivity, from a group of people getting together and acting in concert. As power is considered as closely related to, if not an essential part of empowerment, one may wonder whether this definition of power by Arendt could also be applied into the understanding of empowerment: is it possible that empowerment is generally more strongly present on the collective or communal level, than that of the individual? Is absolute, ultimate empowerment only possible to be triggered by collective rather than individual action?

One of the most important and influential power theorists Steven Lukes (1974) sees power as a multi-faceted concept having three dimensions. The *first dimension* of power is that already considered by Dahl (1957), according to which power is essentially exercised in terms of decision-making: the one who prevails in decision-making can be considered to have more power than those who are excluded from decision-making. Decisions are thought to entail overt, clearly observable conflicts of interests between those exercising power and those subjected to it. The *second dimension* of power, elaborated by Bachrach & Baratz (1962), complements the first dimension of decision-making, adding another one, that of non-decisions. Not only does the one exercising power triumph over others in decision-making, but also prevents decisions from being taken, excluding the others from the decision-making process. Also in this dimension, a conflict of subjective interests, overt or covert, in terms of decisions or non-decisions, is a necessary condition for the exercise of power (Lukes 1974, Sadan 2004). This, however, is inaccurate according to Lukes. Indeed, is not the power to prevent conflicts from arising in the first place the most effective use of power? Thus, in the *third dimension* of power, the presence of an overt conflict is not considered necessary for the phenomenon of power to occur. In fact, in the terms used by Lukes, there can be a *potential* for conflict – a latent conflict – which, however, may or may not ever be realized. This latent conflict is

essentially a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they excluded from the decision-making. The most elaborate one, the third dimension of power is the most relevant also for the analysis of empowerment, allowing for the absence of conflict in the process of change caused by the exercise of power. Rather than resulting from a conflict, empowerment is a process of change emerging from consensual interaction (Lukes 1974).

A complementary, and the most relevant viewpoint for the purposes of this study is the Foucauldian view on power, an alternative theory of power presented by Michael Foucault (1986). Inspired by Foucault, the Danish political scientist Torben Bech Dyrberg (1997), views power as not limited to decisions or conflicts, but essentially as being coterminous with identity and identification, something that has a circular structure. Indeed, as Foucault claims, power has to be considered as something that circulates, that only functions in the form of a chain. Power therefore never has a specific location, but is exercised through a net-like organization and exists everywhere (Foucault 1986). Bech Dyrberg complements this view by presenting power as a process or relation, which is irreducible, non-determinate, non-derivative and non-objective – *power adheres to nothing but itself*. Power is not determined by anything, as it is but sheer possibility. Power is the ability to do something, to make a difference. Power is immanent in action, as action entails making a difference. Power is an empty place, a limitless possibility, an open-ended process of identification. Power is the becoming, the constitution of identity – process of how the ability to make a difference shapes itself:

“Power is the name for that which constitutes identity but which in itself has no identity – the limit of language which can only be shown” (Bech Dyrberg 1997; p. 93).

As we have seen, power is therefore a rather abstract and slippery concept not easily to be grasped. Bech Dyrberg emphasizes that power, having no specific location, only has a virtual existence as the trace of the circular structure of the process of becoming of identity. The circularity of power is thus its essential

characteristic. In the process of becoming, power is at the same time the cause and the effect. Indeed, according to Bech Dyrberg, ability to make a difference is a metaphorical effect to power itself. Power is therefore an effect whose cause is itself a retroactive effect of power: ability is the cause of making a difference, but this effect also causes the ability in the first place (Bech Dyrberg 1997).

So how is *power* related to *empowerment*? Is power the cause or the effect of empowerment? Or, what if, as its root concept *power*, empowerment also has a circular structure? In this circular structure it is difficult to recognize the beginning and the end, and to distinguish between the cause and the effect. Is empowerment triggered by power? Does one feel empowered with the gained or discovered ability to make a difference? Or does empowerment lead to an increase in power? Do the actions taken as a result of the ability to make a difference result in an even expanded ability to make a bigger difference? Is empowerment part of this process, its source or its outcome? Or is it even relevant to try and distinguish between them, as in the end it is all part of a circular structure?

As we have seen, the ways to define power are as various as the power theorists. In this study, however, drawing on the theory of Bech Dyrberg (1997), power will be defined as *the process of the becoming of identity, something that has a circular structure*, serving as the theoretical framework for the analysis of community empowerment in the context of TCRS in Tanzania. It shall be noted, however, that my analytical interest will focus simply on *how the actors understand power*, not on taking the analysis of power on to a further level.

3.4. Problematic in the Study of Empowerment

The multidisciplinary interest in *empowerment* and the consequent diverging emphases have added to the complexity and diversity of the definitions of the concept. As for the development field in particular, according to some researchers, it is important to differentiate between two types of empowerment occurring in the context of the international development: instrumentalist

empowerment and intrinsic/genuine empowerment (cf. Kabeer 2001, Swai 2010).

Instrumentalist empowerment refers to the empowerment policies and practices promoted by international institutions and development agencies (such as the World Bank), seen by the critics as the heir of colonialism; often leading to dislocation of the marginalized – often women – and dichotomies between the empowered and the disempowered, educated and uneducated, literate and illiterate. In the Foucauldian spirit, Cruikshank (1999), for instance, sees the empowerment programs, or the “will to empower” in general, as a strategy of governments or institutions to regulate the individuals and to guide them towards an appropriate end, that of being transformed from the passive, apathetic powerless into active, participatory citizens, maximizing their actions and political involvements. Moreover, as Swai (2010) rightly argues, the concept of *empowerment* itself is a Eurocentric construction promoting Western values and ideologies, which therefore maintains existing power relations and dominance of the West over the Third World. According to her, genuine empowerment cannot occur as a result of pre-determined practices led by the development agency, which aim at participation, while simultaneously setting limits to participation and empowerment (Swai 2010).

In contrast, genuine empowerment, as we have seen in the previous chapters, is something more in-depth and comprehensive, something more abstract and not easily definable, starting ‘from within’ the individuals and collectives, which is therefore also more sustainable with long-term effects and continuity. The problematic with this notion of empowerment, however, lies in its context-dependency, abstract character and subjectivity. How to *define* and *identify* genuine empowerment? How does it *manifest* in practical contexts? Is it relevant to *examine* and *evaluate* genuine empowerment in scientific terms and by scientific methods?

The prerequisite for studying empowerment is therefore setting as a starting point its inherent complexity and multidimensionality, as well as having to take

into account the various aspects and emphases related to it. As empowerment is a context-dependent phenomenon that can have diverse manifestations, it is essential not to try and fit it in a neat box of definitions, or to set binding principles to its examination. Essential in the study of empowerment is instead open-mindedness, as well as an ability to immerse into the context while simultaneously examining the phenomenon from the outside.

3.5. Significance of the Study and Research Questions

While the contemporary literature provides a variety of studies on individual and women's empowerment, the aspects of community empowerment have received slightly less attention (cf. e.g. Järvinen 2007, Eklund 1999). As we have seen in the literature, community-level empowerment is seen as an increased sense of community and participation, as well as an ability to collaborate in order to achieve common goals (Eklund 1999). However, as with the other aspects of empowerment, more context-dependent information, case studies and field experiences on community empowerment and what it means in the development field are needed in order to understand better its essence.

Therefore, to address the demand, this study will bring a contribution to the literature by complementing the previous empowerment studies with a specific focus on the community level of empowerment. This study will aim at providing first-hand, context-dependent information on the practices and perspectives on community empowerment in the development field at a specific development location. Moreover, the present study will essentially try to better identify and define *genuine* empowerment, and promote it over *instrumental* empowerment, so as to enhance the sustainability of the empowerment programs, which will, ideally, also lead to a more sustainable development on a larger scale.

3.5.1. Research Questions

The literature and previous studies suggest various problematic themes related to empowerment in the development field. In the case of this study, empowerment will be examined especially in its communal aspects. A special emphasis will be placed on the inherent concept of **power**, specifically in terms

of the developing and changing power relations in the community manifest in the empowerment process.

The objective of the study is thus to grasp an understanding of the local perceptions of community empowerment, and in particular 1) its practical manifestations with regards the program goals and the resulting changes 2) the intuitive understanding of empowerment by the agents, and 3) the developments and the potential changes in the power relations within the community, caused by or leading to empowerment.

The core questions of the research, supported and inspired by the aspects brought up in previous research, will thus be as follows:

- 1) *What are the perceived changes in the individuals and the communities resulting from the empowerment intervention?*
- 2) *What is the essence of empowerment according to the agents?*
- 3) *How are the internal power relations affected by the empowerment intervention?*

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Choice of Methods: Qualitative Case Study

As we have seen, empowerment is a complex and rather abstract phenomenon. Therefore, a special attention shall be paid to the choice of methods in order to be able to grasp as broad as possible an understanding of the concept. Firstly, as empowerment usually is a subjective experience varying from one location to another, the use of only rigid, statistic-based quantitative methods is not relevant and will lead to a limited understanding of the phenomenon (e.g. Eklund 1999). Rather, as is also emphasized by several theorists (e.g. Adams 2003, Eklund 1999, Israel et al. 1994, Kabeer 2001), by complementing the quantitative methods with a variety of qualitative methods, it is possible to examine the phenomenon on a more in-depth level. Moreover, qualitative methods are also considered to be more flexible and adaptable to the changing conditions of the different contexts in examining empowerment (Eklund 1999), in general more suitable to gain a holistic understanding of the context of study (Miles & Huberman 1994).

In the case of the present analysis, case study of community empowerment in the context of TCRS in Tanzania, the aim was not to *evaluate* the level of empowerment as such, but rather to understand how it is experienced in the local context. Therefore, no quantitative, measure-based methods were used. Instead, I used a set of purely *qualitative methods*⁶.

The present analysis is a qualitative *case study* of community empowerment in the context of TCRS in Tanzania. *Case study* was chosen as a method, as it enables the in-depth exploration of the intricacy and particularity of a social phenomenon, program, event, activity, process or one or more individuals.

⁶“Qualitative research is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a “field” or life situation. These situations are typically “banal” or normal ones, reflective of the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies, and organizations. The researcher’s role is to gain a “holistic” (systemic, encompassing, integrated) overview of the context under study: its logic, its arrangements, its explicit and implicit rules” (Miles & Huberman 1994; p. 6).

Typical to a case study is to answer 'how' and 'why' questions rather than 'what if' questions. Usually involving several sources of data and consequently producing large amounts of data, case studies are considered as a rather complex data collection and processing method. The advantages of a case study are its flexibility and applicability to real-life situations (Creswell 2009, Hsieh s.d., Soy 1997).

In order to understand the phenomenon on a more general level, I first familiarized myself with a selection of earlier empowerment theories. Secondly, I spent 11 weeks in the location of the study in Tanzania, working as a volunteer/intern at the headquarters of TCRS in Dar es Salaam. At the beginning of this period, to better immerse into the local context, I read through a good number of official documents given by the NGO, including annual reports and strategy papers. Moreover, I was conversing with the staff members, asking about their experiences and ideas with regard to empowerment and the Community Empowerment Programs. On a daily basis, I was also taking notes and keeping an internship diary, observing and reflecting the day-to-day activities of the NGO. During a field trip to one of the CEP target districts, Kilwa, I had the chance to meet and talk with the community members taking part in the empowerment trainings. A field trip diary was also kept. Finally, to collect what was to form the most substantial part of the data, I conducted a set of *qualitative, semi-structured interviews* with the staff members, as well as with a group of community members during the field trip to Kilwa. *Qualitative interviewing* is an interactive, situational and generative data collection method, enabling the exploration of the points of view of the research subjects. The strengths of qualitative interviewing lie in its flexibility and sensibility to context, which is required when trying to discover how the interviewees interpret and experience the social world (Miller & Glassner 2004; Mason 2002).

As for the data analysis method, a *phenomenological hermeneutic*⁷ approach was chosen. This method enables an in-depth comprehension of entities, required in

⁷ Phenomenological hermeneutic analysis is a combination of the rules of *phenomenological analysis* and *hermeneutics*, both focusing on the in-depth understanding of certain phenomena.

the study of the abstract and complex phenomenon of empowerment (Eklund 1999). The aim of a phenomenological hermeneutic analysis is to find the universal, unchangeable essence of the object of research – seeking understanding through the description of lived experiences. Interpretive approach, phenomenological hermeneutic research is always subjective and represents the researcher's interpretation *at the moment*, which can, naturally, be different at a later occasion. In fact, phenomenological hermeneutic analysis does not therefore have one single end-point. Ideally, in a phenomenological hermeneutic analysis, the researcher does not have *a priori* assumptions or prejudices of the object of study. During the analysis process, the object is examined from alternating perspectives, using a number of methods, such as interviews, discussion and participant observation. The dialectic process of analysis, which involves repeated reading of the text, asking and answering questions of the information, and moving between the entirety and its parts, text and context, comparing the whole to its part is referred to as the *hermeneutic circle* (Croucher et al. 2004, Patterson & Williams 2002, Routio 2007a, 2007b). The process of the hermeneutic circle applied in this particular study will be described more in detail after a brief presentation of the case of the study.

4.2. Introduction to the Case: TCRS

Established in 1964, Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS) is a Tanzanian national NGO initially missioned to provide emergency relief and humanitarian assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers fleeing from the surrounding countries such as Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Since the mid-80s, the refugee populations starting to diminish and become more self-reliant, TCRS expanded its mandate to include also development work for local Tanzanian populations, inaugurating its first development projects in Kigoma and Singida regions. TCRS started to implement its unique Community

Typical for this approach is the absence of a single set of procedures or strict rules, as there is, in fact, no single correct interpretation of phenomena (University of Jyväskylä s.d., Patterson & Williams 2002).

Empowerment Programs (CEPs) in disadvantaged local communities, aiming at empowering the most vulnerable populations to build their own development. In 2004, as a result of a policy shift from service provision to development facilitation, the CEP gained a major role in the strategic approach of TCRS. At present, TCRS is working with several of the poorest districts in Tanzania, while at the same time continuing with the tradition of providing assistance and support to the refugee populations living in the old refugee camps and settlements as well as to those living in the urban areas. To date, TCRS has assisted over two million people in need, half of whom being refugees from the surrounding countries, the other half consisting of the local Tanzanian communities (*TCRS 2007a, 2007b, 2010, 2013*).

Headquartered in Dar es Salaam, TCRS has currently a staff of over 248 individuals, from field volunteers to administrators, social workers and the director. The head office in Dar es Salaam is in charge of coordination and logistical support of all the field projects, as well as of liaison and communications with the donors and partner organizations. The CEP field offices, working with the local communities for their empowerment, are currently located in five CEP project areas in the Kibondo, Ngara, Kishapu, Morogoro and Kilwa districts (*TCRS 2012*), locations identified as the ones with the highest vulnerability to disaster as well as with the greatest concentrations of poverty. Directing its activities specifically for the extremely vulnerable groups (EVGs); “marginalized and vulnerable poor whose livelihoods are threatened by the effects of natural and human-made disasters” (*TCRS 2013*), internally displaced persons (IDPs), the poorest of the poor, and individuals affected by HIV/AIDS, TCRS is providing assistance to an estimated 300 000 beneficiaries annually, being thus one of the most active and largest NGOs in the region.

As indicated by its very name, TCRS bases its actions and values on the Christian belief. TCRS's strategies are also strongly influenced and guided by the global strategy of the parent organization LWF/DWS. Indeed, LWF/DWS aims at improving the lives of marginalized and vulnerable people, following the Empowerment, Integrated, and Rights-Based Approaches in all its development

work. These strategic approaches, aiming e.g. at building people's capacities to achieve results for themselves, interlinking all lines of action in the development work, as well as building up rights awareness to increase action on human rights and improved accountability, have therefore also been adopted by TCRS. In addition to the parent organization's strategic approaches, any TCRS activities are also dependent on the national policies and strategies, the current ones being the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 and the NSGRP 2005.

TCRS has identified as its **mission** and **overall program goal** to "*remain committed to reducing human suffering and poverty by empowering vulnerable, marginalized, and displaced communities in Tanzania to achieve self-reliance and sustainable development*", **visioning** of "*empowered communities living in a just, democratic society, united in diversity, and enjoying quality of life and God-given dignity*", with universal justice, dignity, self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods as its **core values** (TCRS 2007a, 2013).

With nearly 50 years of successfully working to improve the lives of the marginalized and the vulnerable, TCRS is one of the longest serving and most respected development organizations in Tanzania. With an experienced, flexible and committed staff, it has therefore gained an excellent reputation on the local, national and international levels, enjoying good relations with local people, the national government and international agencies. Unfortunately, despite the good reputation resulting from the outstanding results and outcomes in both development and refugee work, TCRS has not managed to build up a broad enough donor base, often leading to insufficient funding (TCRS 2007a, 2007b, 2010). TCRS is constantly looking for new partners and donors, one among the biggest ones of whom currently being the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) / Suomen Lähetysseura.

4.3. Data Collection

In my analysis, I used two types of data: *secondary* and *primary* data⁸. The secondary data consists of the official documents of the NGO, including e.g. the Annual Reports between the years 2003 and 2012, the Country Strategy 2008-2013, Program Evaluation Reports 2003, 2007 & 2010, a selection of Monthly and Quarterly Management Reports, as well as a number of empowerment related documents by TCRS and the parent organization LWF. The primary data consists of 15 qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted between June and August 2013. As is recommended by e.g. Mason (2002), the interview questions (See Appendices I & II) were formulated so as to be as specific as possible, concerning the everyday life and activities of the interviewees, in order to avoid confusion and misunderstandings on the part of the interviewees, often leading to abstract answers empty of any grounded meaning. The interview questions, categorized by themes⁹ were also left open to possible modifications in the very moment of interviewing, to better accommodate the experiences, understanding and the level of the English language of the interviewee.

Four of the interviews were conducted with the local participants of the CEPs in the villages of Kisima Mkika, Mchakama and Njinjo in the district of Kilwa during the project evaluation visit in early June 2013. As the interviewees did not speak English, in all these interviews I had to resort to the help of a translator, a member of TCRS field staff, who firstly translated the interview questions from English into Kiswahili, and secondly the answers from Kiswahili into English. As a result, these interviews were subject to misinterpretations and alterations, due to the use of an intermediary in the transfer of information.

⁸ *Primary data* is the first-hand information, all the original objects or documents collected by the researcher themselves, while *secondary data* is the second-hand information, something written about the primary source, written previously by someone else than the researcher themselves (Henderson *s.d.*).

⁹ The interview themes were focused on different perspectives on the Community Empowerment, with slightly different emphases for the staff members and for the community members. The themes for the staff members were as follows: a) General/Introductory questions b) Community Empowerment Programs c) Community & Participation d) Process of Empowerment e) Empowerment Agent / Role of TCRS. The themes for the community members were a) General/Introductory b) TCRS c) CEP & Community d) Participation & Community. See Appendices I & II for the full interview structure.

The rest of the interviews were all conducted in English with the TCRS staff; four with the Director, the former and the present Program Coordinator, and the Project Accountant at the headquarters in Dar es Salaam; two with the District Manager and Field Officer in the district of Kilwa, and the remaining five with Field Officers and District Managers from Morogoro, Kishapu and Ngara in the city of Morogoro during a five-day strategy planning workshop.

Table 1. *Distribution of gender and language in the interviews*

Interviews	Male	Female	Total
Kiswahili		4*	4
English	6	5	11
Total	6	9	15

*The number does not correspond with the number of interviewees, as some of the interviews were conducted with a large group of participants.

In addition to the interviews, I kept an internship diary, marking down my observations and discoveries during the time spent at TCRS. The diary includes notes from the interview situations, observations from the field trip to the target villages, as well as notes of the everyday activities at the headquarters in Dar es Salaam. Although not directly serving as analyzable data as such, the interview diary helps to better understand the context and to get a better overall idea of the work of the organization, as well as of the local understanding of the concept of empowerment.

4.4. Data Analysis

Before taking on the actual analysis, I was to transcribe the recorded interviews in a written form so as to make them more easily analyzable. This process was painstaking, as every single word of the interviews was written down. By transcribing, I was also to gain an initial overall understanding of the primary data. The transcription process was followed by, in accordance with the guidelines of the phenomenological hermeneutic approach (c.f. Patterson & Williams 2002), the creation of an organizing system i.e. *indexing system*: each sentence of the interviews was numbered sequentially, to serve as a reference of

location of the specific units of text. After having prepared the primary data for the analysis, I was to start the *hermeneutic circle* of analysis, the dialectal interpretation of the data.

The process of the hermeneutic circle – the dialogue between the experiences of the agents and the existing knowledge and understanding I had already gained on the phenomenon – consists of six different dialectal phases, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of the data. The phases will be described below one by one more in detail¹⁰.

The *first* phase, which, in fact, occurred already prior to the actual analysis, consisted of the recognition of a need for information on the phenomenon of empowerment. This led to the initial empowerment literature review, which, in turn – as a result of the accumulation of my initial knowledge now complemented with the new knowledge – led e.g. to the discovery of the context-dependency of the phenomenon.

At the *second* phase, according to my reasoning enabled by the existing knowledge, it was recognized that, as empowerment is always context-dependent, more information was needed on the context of the study and the local experience of empowerment. At this stage, the secondary and primary data were involved in the dialogue. I started to immerse into both of the data, reading through the texts over and over again, asking and answering questions of the information. Many of the questions were answered immediately in the dialogue of my existing knowledge and the data, and will thus, for the sake of clarity, not be presented here, while some rose above the others in their complexity and the consequent importance.

The *third* phase consisted of recognizing the importance of the aforementioned more complex questions, which were, in fact, to form the core research questions

¹⁰ The description of the phases was inspired by the hermeneutic study by von Zweck, Paterson & Pentland (2008), where the researchers used a hermeneutic circle to enhance their understanding on the issues influencing workforce integration.

of the analysis, and the consequent need of more information. To answer the research questions, the data was thus read and reread again, in trying to find similarities, themes and patterns corresponding to the research questions.

At the *fourth* phase, it was recognized that to better answer the research questions, the corresponding themes, similarities and patterns found in the data had to be categorized. To determine the categorization, the data was read and reread again, asking and answering more specific questions according to the themes corresponding to the research questions.

At the *fifth* phase, the themes found in the data were categorized and sub-categorized under the research questions as follows:

- 1) Themes corresponding to the question “What are the perceived changes in the individuals and the communities resulting from the empowerment intervention?”
 - a. Empowerment as intervention
 - i. Target Groups of the CEP
 - ii. Objectives and Principles
 - iii. Practices and Activities
 - b. Changes Triggered by the CEPs
 - i. Direct Experiences of the Community Members
 - ii. Changes Reported by the Staff
 - iii. Non-Material Changes
 - iv. Changes in the Leadership
 - v. Changes in the Collective
 - vi. Changes as Components or Catalysts of Empowerment

- 2) Themes corresponding to the question “What is the essence of empowerment according to the agents?”
 - a. Indicators of Empowerment
 - b. Genuine Understanding of Empowerment
 - c. Characteristics of an Empowered Individual

- d. Characteristics of an Empowered Community
 - e. TCRS's Role in the Process of Empowerment
 - f. Sustainability
 - g. Conditions for Empowerment
 - i. Strategies for Empowerment
 - h. Empowerment Obstacles
- 3) Themes corresponding to the question "How are the internal power relations affected by the empowerment intervention?"
- a. Power Relations in the Community before and after Empowerment
 - i. Power Relations between the Community Leaders and the Community Members
 - ii. Power Relations between the Marginalized and the Rest of the Community
 - iii. Power Relations between Men and Women
 - b. Power in Empowerment
 - i. Sources of Power
 - ii. Circularity of Power and Empowerment

At the *sixth* phase, it was once again recognized that more specific information was needed, and to answer the questions, it was essential to look both at the small parts of texts as well as the entirety of the text. I was especially searching to find terms, sentences and larger text entities directly or indirectly related to the concepts of *change*, *empower*, and *power*.

As a result of this dialogue, I was able to gain a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in the local context, as well as to answer each of the research questions. The results of the above analysis shall be presented in the three following chapters.

4.5. Limitations and Ethical Considerations of the Study

The major limitation of the study is largely related to the fact that I was only able to spend a relatively short period of time, 11 weeks, in the study context in

Tanzania. Even though I had prepared for the visit in advance by getting familiar with the context through travel guidebooks, online articles and forums; as well as phone calls, face-to-face meetings and discussions with individuals having been in Tanzania before, it is generally nearly impossible to be able to gain a proper in-depth understanding of the local culture in as short a period of time as 2,5 months. This might have affected the interpretation of the data and more generally the way I was examining the context.

Moreover, I was not able to absorb the local language Kiswahili further than on the basic level, and did not therefore have access to some of the documents (e.g. the *Empowerment Curriculum* by TCRS), and was not able to conduct the interviews in the home language of all the interviewees, which, in some cases, led to the use of an interpreter. As a result, the final contents of these interviews might include some alterations of meaning and misinterpretations both from the part of the translator and myself. In addition, as Miller & Glassner (2004) rightly point out, as I, as an interviewer, did not share the membership of the interviewee groups (TCRS staff; community members) it is likely that I simply did not know enough about the community empowerment phenomenon, CEP trainings and the local context in general to be able to ask all the right questions.

Finally, in terms of the concept of empowerment in particular, as it is a long-term, unpredictable and open-ended process, it was not realistic to even expect a chance to witness the course of the process during the short study visit. I did manage to grasp a general idea of the local meaning of the concept of empowerment by reading the related project documents and reports provided by the organization, by interviewing and discussing with the staff, and by visiting a number of the project villages in person. However, it is likely that the more in-depth, holistic understanding of the dynamics and meanings of empowerment is still lacking.

As for the ethical considerations, the interviewed staff members were all well aware of the intentions and purposes of the interviews and gave their consent. The representatives of TCRS also openly agreed on the use of the NGO's real

name instead of a pseudonym in the research. The individual interviewees were, however, kept anonymous by using a number to refer to them instead of revealing their real names. The case of the interviewed villagers is, however, more problematic in terms of research ethics. Firstly, due to the language barrier, all of the interviews in the target villages were conducted with the help of an interpreter, a staff member of TCRS. This might have affected the answers firstly from the point of view of the interviewees, as they might have felt pressured to only share the positive experiences, giving little or no emphasis on the negative experiences. Secondly, the interpreter – a member of the staff – might have seen and interpreted the answers in a slightly more positive light than what an external interpreter would have. Moreover, due to the extremely limited time allocated for the interviews in the villages, and to the fact that they were conducted on the same occasion as the strategy evaluation interviews, conducted by a group of external evaluators, it is very likely that the interviewed villagers were not fully aware of the purpose of my interviews.

5. FINDINGS 1 – EMPOWERMENT AS INTERVENTION: PROGRAM GOALS AND PERCEIVED CHANGE

In this chapter, I will present my findings relating to the first research question: the perceived changes in the individuals and the communities triggered by the empowerment intervention. The findings are based on the analysis of the annual reports, other official documents of the NGO, and the interviews conducted with the villagers and the staff members. I will first present the Community Empowerment Programs on a more general level, and then look more closely into the perceived changes, both from the point of view of the villagers themselves and the staff members, in material and non-material terms, and on the level of the individuals and the entire community. The chapter will be concluded by examining the relation of these changes to the phenomenon of empowerment.

5.1. Community Empowerment Programs

5.1.1. Generalities

Currently, TCRS is implementing its Community Empowerment Programs in five poor districts in the Western and Eastern part of Tanzania, namely Kibondo, Ngara, Kishapu, Morogoro and Kilwa. The locations have been selected with two specific criteria: poverty level, as indicated by the District Development Index, a tool developed by the Tanzanian government, based on the UNDP Human Development Index (*UNDP 2013*); and secondly, refugee presence in the district (*TCRS 2012*). Having selected the target districts, TCRS meets with the local representatives to identify the poorest wards within each of the districts, and finally the poorest villages within each of the wards,¹¹ which then become the CEP intervention sites. In each of the target districts, a Community Empowerment team is assembled to work together with the local community

¹¹ According to the definition of LWF/DWS, “Wards are geographical/political divisions of a district, containing a population of 6,000-12,000, and villages are geographical/political subdivisions of wards each with 500-4,000 people” (*LWF 2008*).

members. The team is headed by a District Manager and a Field Officer appointed by TCRS, who are then joined by Area Facilitator and Volunteer Animator, chosen among the local community members in each target village to represent and to help train the community (TCRS 2012).

5.1.2. Definitions of Community

In the context of TCRS, the concept of *community* mainly refers to a village. According to the interviewees, on a more general level, *community* is a group of different people (i.e. men, women, disabled, rich, poor, etc.) living together in a certain geographical location, the boundaries of which being often determined by government, e.g. village, ward, district, etc. Even though a community can consist of a variety of people, different tribes and even different languages, with all the members having different understandings and different levels of development, it has something to tie its members together. This common bond can be e.g. shared norms, shared interests, shared lifestyles, shared problems and shared goals, which reminds us of the definition of the community by Israel et al. (1994). The bond, whether it was the norms or the lifestyles, is the most fundamental characteristic of a community.

5.1.3. Target Groups: Who is to be Empowered?

The CEP interventions have two main target groups: firstly, the marginalized in the community, and secondly the village leaders. However, in addition to these two direct beneficiary groups, the entire population of the community and district working area are considered as indirect beneficiaries who are also benefiting from the improved governance and management of the village services as a result of the CEP trainings (LWF 2004, 2008). Moreover, even if not everyone takes directly part in the training sessions, they might later be taught and instructed by those who did take more actively part in the trainings. Consequently, the knowledge spreads among the community members, adding to the overall human capital of the community.

Characteristic to the CEP approach, the marginalized, the people “at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder in any local society” (LWF 2004), are identified

either by a household survey or through a participatory poverty analysis in focus group discussions with the community members, asked to define what makes a person marginalized. Common characteristics raised up in the focus group discussions are e.g. old age, widowness, HIV positive status, orphanhood, particular ethnicity or religious affiliation (TCRS 2004, 2012). According to the interviewees and the principles of TCRS, being marginalized is more than just marginalization on the economical level. Indeed, marginalization can also refer to the lack of basic human rights to food, shelter, education and health. The marginalized cannot for example afford more than one meal per day, they live in poor housing conditions, they have a physical disability, and sometimes they just lack the skills and the knowledge on how to use the resources surrounding them. Moreover, the marginalized people are often not able to enjoy the social and political rights, such as good governance, freedom from discrimination, and the general respect from their own community (LWF 2004).

The second target group, the village leaders, are encouraged to participate both to the common training sessions, as well as to the specific leadership trainings, aiming at more effective planning and management of local health, education, water supply and other community services (LWF 2004, TCRS 2012).

5.1.4. Objectives and Principles

The elemental objective of the CEPs is declared in the overall program goal of TCRS: “[...] *empowering vulnerable, marginalized and displaced communities to achieve self-reliance and sustainable development*”. With empowerment, the vulnerable community members will become active citizens participating in governance and development processes; they will have the knowledge of their basic rights and they will be able to demand services; they will be economically self-reliant through sustainable livelihoods; and they will have responsible, accountable, and skilled leaders (TCRS 2007a).

The purpose of the CEPs for the interviewees is essentially to make the rural inhabitants to realize their potentials: being able to use the surrounding resources for their own development, actively participating and contributing to

the creation of the common well-being and the building of a dignified life with improved livelihood and better governance. One of the main objectives is thus poverty eradication, by using the already existing means in the communities. TCRS does not therefore offer direct material support, but focuses instead on capacity-building, awareness-creation and self-discovery of the community members, so that they, having gained self-confidence, will be able to take control of their own life. According to one of the interviewees, the main aim of the CEPs is simply to give people an option, to give a chance to those people who have been left out of the system.

Indeed, as is acknowledged in the strategy evaluation reports, the CEP work does not necessarily produce dramatic, early or highly visible results, but builds hope, confidence and competence (TCRS 2007b). As also brought up by the interviewees, CEP is essentially a process building people's capacity to achieve results for themselves (TCRS n.d.), to be able to analyze their situation and to plan and implement actions to improve it (TCRS 2004). In addition to the program goal, all CEP activities are guided by the strategic approaches adopted by TCRS:

The Empowerment approach¹² builds people's capacity and competence – both as individuals and as participating members of groups and communities – to achieve results for themselves. By equipping people and local groups with knowledge, skills and attitudes that broaden their options, their confidence can be built up and they can be empowered to take control of their lives. By this it is expected that people must be actively involved in all aspects of their development, from assessment and planning to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (TCRS 2007a; p.11).

Crucial for the CEP, as emphasized in the strategies, is that the individuals and the communities must be themselves in charge of their own development, which requires their active involvement and participation in the CEP activities

¹² The Empowerment Approach is one of the four strategic approaches adopted by TCRS. Also the three other approaches, the Facilitation Approach, the Integrated Approach as well as the Rights Based Approach, all support and guide the CEP work and principles (TCRS 2007a).

throughout the process. TCRS is not to offer quick solutions or to fix the problems of the communities; rather, its role is to act as a facilitator or enabler, launching the process of capacity-building and awareness creation, gradually leading to the overall, long-lasting and sustainable empowerment. The process is up to the community members themselves to define, direct and carry out. Indeed, the very idea and vision of the CEPs is embodied in an old Kiswahili proverb: *Usimpe mtu samaki, bali mfundishe kuvua*; “Do not give a poor person a fish, but teach them how to fish” (TCRS 2010a, 2012). The main principles are the same for all the CEPs in the different target districts, each of which having, however, their own context-dependent emphases and practices.

5.1.5. Practices and Activities

All of the Community Empowerment Programs in the various districts are implemented according to the Community Empowerment Curriculum, a set of guidelines established by TCRS in 2003 to outline the process of empowerment step by step (LWF 2004, Benini 2008). The Curriculum consists of two different course types, one for the marginalized and one for the leaders. Moreover, the course for the marginalized can be further broken down into two lines, one for the illiterate and one for the literate marginalized.

Despite the formalized guidelines delineated in the Community Empowerment Curriculum, the activities and the priorities of the program are first and foremost defined by the community itself, not pre-planned and decided by TCRS (LWF 2004). Thus, the contents of the trainings vary greatly between the target areas, usually, however, leaning on the principle of “learning by doing” (TCRS 2004, LWF 2004). The program begins with a rather intensive period of training and sensitization activities, during which the participants of the curriculum meet regularly, from one to three times a week, attending the sessions led by the volunteer animator from the villages. This initial phase usually takes one year to complete, after which the participants reorganize themselves into new interest-based groups, in order to put their plans into action. The classes completed, the community members and village leaders develop and implement together a 3-

year Rolling Development Plan, or “Village Action Plan”, designed to help fulfill the needs and priorities of the community (*TCRS 2012*).

The entire process of empowerment usually takes a long time and can last several years, depending on the starting level and the state of mind of the community. The ultimate goal of the CEP trainings is graduation, after which the TCRS staff pulls out of the village, the volunteer workers (Area Facilitators and Volunteer Animators) however still remaining in the village, in order to keep the acquired knowledge in the community, making thus the development and empowerment more sustainable (*TCRS 2012*).

As noticed earlier, the trainings targeted for the marginalized vary from one district to another. The activities can include e.g. functional literacy trainings on writing, reading and counting skills; trainings on health, hygiene & sanitation; entrepreneurship & income generating activities (IGAs), such as animal husbandry, fish farming, forestry and handicrafts (e.g. cloth decoration, soap making and mat weaving); different microfinance, savings & credit schemes such as Village Community Banks (VICOBAs); HIV/AIDS awareness creation; sanitation & food security; democracy, human rights & civic education; Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS), a tool to track the expenditure of public funds; disaster preparedness, environmental management & climate change adaptation; agricultural activities and improved farming methods, etc. In addition to the more general trainings, there are also specific trainings targeting especially women, such as classes on gender equity and human rights for women and children (*TCRS 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012*). Not everyone participates in all of the groups; community members are instead encouraged to form activity groups according to their own interest, which adds to their learning motivation.

The trainings intended for the community leaders include classes on good governance; basic roles and responsibilities of the leader; participatory planning; budgeting; situation analysis & problem identification; monitoring & evaluation; resource mobilization; communication skills; democracy; PETS; civic education;

gender & HIV/AIDS mainstreaming, as well as community based disaster preparedness, among other things (TCRS 2007, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2013, Benini 2008).

The training activities designed to meet the aforementioned objectives of the CEPs seem relevant: the great emphasis placed on the involvement of the marginalized, as well as on practical every-day activities, “learning by doing”, is largely contributing to building up self-confidence among the community members. Trainings on several topics, from the elementary basics (cf. functional literacy and numeracy classes, basic hygiene and food security trainings) all the way to the higher levels of competence (cf. IGAs, improved farming methods, civic education and awareness creation on human and women’s rights), making the community members realize their values and capabilities, enable the thorough development of competence and skills, both of which add to the development of self-confidence and the feeling of independence. The grass-roots based training approach allows the involvement and active participation of all the community members, who, having expanded their knowledge and skills, can and will start analyzing their situation and finding solutions for themselves. An important aspect of the trainings is also the inclusion of a second target group: not only focusing on the marginalized, but also involving those with the most influence and esteem in the villages – the leaders – who can bring about the change even on a larger scale, reaching out to all the members in the entire community.

5.2. Changes Triggered by the CEPs

5.2.1. Direct Experiences of the Community Members

There is no denying that the CEPs bring about many changes in the target communities. I was able to witness this with my own eyes during the field trip in the district of Kilwa. In Kilwa, albeit a very traditional Muslim community, women now had the courage to represent themselves and speak in front of the public in the general village meetings. The villages had developed a strong community spirit and a feeling of pride, whereby the villagers were e.g. wearing

blue t-shirts with the printed text “VICOBA”, surely adding to their team spirit, group dynamics, feeling of self-esteem and general motivation.

When talking to some of the community members, it was clear how happy and proud they felt being able to share their positive experiences on the CEP trainings. All of the interviewed community members recognized there had been many changes in their lives as a result of the trainings. The interviewees often mentioned many material changes in the everyday life; however, these changes, as the trainings in general had had a major impact also on the change in mindset they had experienced. This change of mind, which shall be treated in the later chapter, can be considered as a phase, characteristic or component of empowerment.

The changes mentioned most often by the villagers were related to improved agricultural and farming methods, leading to a better harvest and consequently an increased income. Increased income in turn enables the villagers to stand on their own and be independent, and in the case of the women, not having to depend on their husband. Moreover, the community members are now able to prioritize their needs, plan their lives and think forward to the future. One clear priority seems to be being able to provide education for the children, being able to pay school fees and buy the school uniforms. Other changes enabled by the increased income are e.g. improved housing and a more balanced diet with more than only one meal per day.

One community member explained how the trainings had made her think: the trainings had led to an awakening and a change of mindset. As a result of the trainings, the interviewed community member started to engage in an even bigger number of projects (e.g. related to IGAs) than before, and was consequently able to enjoy a better harvest and an increased income. The fact of being able to increase one’s income as a result of one’s own actions is clearly contributing to the strengthening of self-esteem and motivation.

Another sign of a change in the villages was the major increase in cooperation among the villagers. Indeed, even though not every member of the community takes part in the trainings, the learned skills and knowledge are passed forward in the villages, as the trained community members transfer the knowledge by teaching others. This, in addition to increasing the overall human capital as well as the crops and thereby the income of the entire community, ties the villagers together, as they now have something more in common. As a result of the CEP trainings, often held in a group-setting, the villages experience a higher sense of unity, collaboration and community spirit. Villagers are helping one another out and genuinely offering support to each other. The villagers are now seeing the common good as their goal, advocating for those who have not been able to take part in the trainings, so that everyone would have equal chances in the community. Moreover, according to the example given by an interviewed villager, the community members now experience an atmosphere of “positive competition”, where one wants to exceed another in skills and knowledge – this, however, in a supportive and “brotherly” way. This kind of positive competing increases motivation even further and most likely also speeds up the learning process of the community.

In addition to the improved farming methods and the resulted increased income, also acquired literacy skills seem to have a major impact on the villagers, often in particular women. Indeed, already by knowing the basics can have dramatic changes in the lives of the villagers: being able to read simple things such as “DANGER” signs can turn out to be life-saving, enabling the individuals to determine whether or not a bridge or a path should be crossed or avoided. Moreover, literacy and numeracy skills acquired by women have significantly improved their position with respect to the men, as women now have the courage to stand up for themselves. Even though men are still considered as the heads of the house, they have already started to acknowledge women’s role and the right to property and income. As a result of the acquired skills, women are e.g. able to keep better track of the family income, whereby men no longer spend everything as they wish, but take the entire family into consideration when deciding how to use the income. Even though not having been trained directly,

men have still experienced a change indirectly, becoming aware of the rights of the women, and being able to evaluate the benefits of the entire family. Indeed, men are becoming more truthful and loyal to the family.

One of the most significant changes emerging from the interviews of the community members was an example of rejecting age-old traditions and adopting completely new customs, i.e. from going to the witch doctor to starting to use Western medication and getting treatment at a dispensary. This indicates an enormous mind change, as up to date, it has been common practice to believe that diseases such as malaria are caused by evil spirits, and which can therefore only be treated by a witch doctor. Strengthened by the trainings, thereby being able to compare the advantages and disadvantages as well as to see the benefits of the modern medication, however, the villagers are little by little starting to reject the old habits no longer considered beneficial and effective.

While in the villages, I also had the chance to hear the success story of a widow lady, a former marginalized who currently holds the position of chairperson of one of the VICOBA groups. The widow mother of two children, after joining a group of entrepreneurial skills training, received a loan and started her own small business. By the business activities, she managed to establish a steady income, and was able to improve the housing conditions as well as to pay the school fees for her children. From being a marginalized, poor person with no hope of a better life, the widow lady became an independent, self-confident and equal member of the community, not only being able to be in control of her life and take care of herself, but also being able to support her children and provide education for them, making thus an investment for their future. Already this is a proof of the true success of the CEP approach. Having said that, the widow lady was able to exceed all the expectations by becoming the chairperson of a VICOBA group. Indeed, having the confidence, skills and the knowledge, the widow lady ran for the position and was elected by the other group members. This speaks for an atmosphere of general acceptance, unity, equality and democracy now reigning in the village.

5.2.2. Changes Reported by the Staff

Adding to the long-term triumph of the CEP approach, also the Annual Reports published by TCRS report innumerous examples of success stories or major changes both at the individual and the community level, both in material and mental terms. In many cases for example, the community members describe having experienced “enlightenment”: as a result of the trainings, their eyes have been opened to see all the resources and possibilities surrounding them: “*Our major resource is ourselves – people!*” (Mbiko from Migerere village, Kilwa, TCRS 2004; p. 21). The marginalized have come to realize that they have all the opportunities to contribute to their own development, and that they, in fact, do not have to remain marginalized all their life: “*I was nobody, now I’m somebody*” (Aloice Kalimanzira from Kiduduye village, Karagwe, TCRS 2004; p. 16).

The skills trainings in e.g. improved farming methods often result in concrete, material changes, such as increased harvests, improved housings and health, and more generally in increased income. For example, using a special irrigation system technique enables the farmers to produce enough crops also during the dry season (TCRS 2012). Also, as a result of the trainings, more and more houses are being built with baked bricks and iron sheet roofing, instead of using mud and grass (TCRS 2011). The very straightforward material improvements, considered as something very basic and self-evident in Western standards, can have an enormous impact on the life of the community members:

“TCRS activities have changed our lives in this village. We now have access to clean and enough water; we are now washing our bodies and our clothes. Our wives are clean and attractive and we are happy to be with them” (Mwana Jilala from Mwamanota village, Kishapu, TCRS 2011; p.27).

Emphasized in the reports and also brought up by the interviewed staff members, one of the factors considered as the most significant contributors to the experience of change especially in material terms are the VICOBAs and the various income generating activities. Indeed, with the help of a loan from the community bank, the villagers have been able e.g. to diversify their livelihood

options by starting their own business, and thereby having also other income sources in addition to agriculture. With regards agriculture, the loans have enabled the farmers to e.g. buy more animals or start using machines in farming. All this has led to an increase in the income level, allowing thus the villagers to have a better control of their financial situation and to reach basic economic stability. This, in turn, enables them to afford more than one meal a day, to pay for the school fees for their children, to improve their housing conditions, to buy new clothes for themselves and for their family and to pay for medical services. Even a modest increase in the basic income can have enormous impacts on the lives of the community members. Income and economic stability can therefore be considered as a starting point for any bigger changes in the community.

5.2.3. Non-Material Changes

In addition to the material improvements manifested in better housing conditions and an increased number of daily meals, the CEPs also lead to non-material changes occurring in the minds of the individuals. The awareness sessions in different themes have in some cases “unleashed the motivation” of the community members, to become more involved in the public matters of the village (TCRS 2009). The villagers, women and disabled included, have become aware of their rights and have thereby started to demand for improved public services, such as construction of schools (TCRS 2009). Moreover, being able to read and write can significantly change one’s mindset: not having to use their thumb as a signature, but being able to sign their name in letters can be a major source of self-confidence and pride for the marginalized (TCRS 2012). The trainings have been compared to a torch bringing light to the entire community:

“Empowerment is a torch for life! With a torch you light and see what surrounds you. You gain confidence with the environment and act correctly. The TCRS strategy for empowering the marginalized and the villages is handling over a torch” (Vianney Rukashila, Ruhanya village, Karagwe, TCRS 2005; p. 11).

The interviewees report numerous success stories of individuals having gone through a change of some sort. Typical to many of these success stories is that

the successful person is often a woman, possibly to underline the considered importance of these changes for them. Indeed, being born a woman in a patriarchal, male-dominated society almost automatically means more struggles and striving for a better position in life. However, it is possible to rise from “rags to riches”, as the following two success stories show.

The first example tells the story of a marginalized lady whose husband is blind. After joining different trainings organized by TCRS, the lady started to run her own business and to improve the methods she was using in the agricultural activities. As a result, she was able to increase her income, and consequently send her children to school as well as to provide medical care for her husband. All this giving her so much courage, the lady becoming so self-standing, so independent and so determined that the interviewee even compares her status to that of a man: *“This lady is like a man”* (F11).¹³ Even in a seemingly hopeless situation, with the right mindset and the right tools – in this case referring to the knowledge and the consequent self-esteem, it is possible to reach personal success and set a direction to one’s own life.

Another interviewee tells the story of an illiterate, marginalized lady who, after joining the functional literacy classes, found out about the village elections, open to all the villagers equally. Having acquired the literacy skills and the consequent self-esteem and courage, the lady wrote an application letter for the elections, was accepted as a candidate, and finally was elected in the village council. The lady also joined the VICOBA group, started her own small business, and was able to send her children to school with her own income, without depending on her husband. Starting from absolute zero, with not even basic knowledge, this lady became an estimated and respected member of the community, standing on her own and having full control of her life. In her case, the literacy classes not only gave her the skills, but also triggered a mental change process opening her eyes to all the opportunities around her, making her realize her full potentials.

¹³ The interviewees were numbered sequentially by the order the interviews were conducted. The letters F and M before the number refer to the gender (F = female, M = male) of the interviewee.

Indeed, when talking about the changes occurring in addition to the material terms, the interviewed staff members often mentioned a change in *attitudes*: as a result of the trainings, the villagers are now taking more initiative, actively participating in their own development; using whatever resources they can to make an improvement in the living conditions. The villagers have changed from being passive onlookers, waiting for some external organization or the government to bring development for them, to being active self-developers, contributing to the common good and their own development. As also emphasized in the reports, the community members become more aware of their rights, resulting in more active participation in the common decision-making, questioning the government and demanding for their rights. This is a major change especially with regard to the marginalized, who before the trainings did not have any value of themselves. In the words of an interviewee:

“I could really hear what they say, and mostly... they will tell you: ‘I didn’t know this before, but because of TCRS, now I have this kind of information, now I have this kind of knowledge. Before TCRS, I thought I’m just a poor, hopeless person. But now I realize who I am, I have dignity, I have ability to make decisions.’” (M15)

Here the change, even if on an abstract level, is palpable. Something has indeed changed on a very deep level, as before, the person did not seem to have any self-worth or value of themselves as an individual. As a result of the trainings, the acquisition of knowledge, be that of a very basic level, the person has been able to redefine their identity entirely and to realize “who they are”. From being a nobody, this person has become somebody, fully capable of being in control of their own life.

5.2.4. Changes in the Leadership

As for the other course of the curriculum, the leadership training, the changes are reflected in two ways. Firstly, as a result of the trainings, the leaders have become more aware of their roles and responsibilities, acknowledging the importance of transparency, accountability and information sharing with the

villagers. The PETS trainings have led to more systematic record-keeping, participatory planning and the organization of regular village meetings and assemblies. On a general level, the leaders have become more self-confident and have gained more credibility in the eyes of the villagers (*TCRS* 2004, 2007, 2009, 2012). Secondly, also the community members, the marginalized included, have become more aware of their rights, leading to increased action and demands for improvement. Owing to the PETS trainings, the allocation of resources and funds has improved, and consequently more people have access to basic services in education and health care. The villagers have more confidence in their leaders, they participate more actively in the village meetings, they have more courage to communicate with the village leaders and to take action themselves to strive for improved governance and services (*TCRS* 2004, 2012).

5.2.5. Changes in the Collective

Besides the individuals – the marginalized and the village leaders – also the entire community as a collective experiences numerous changes. As a result of the CEPs, the community members have become more closely tied together: the villagers are working together to become stronger as a collective. Those having attended the trainings either encourage and advocate for others to participate, or spread the information and transfer the knowledge to their peers. The villagers realize the benefits of cooperation and are able to see the strength in unity. Everyone is given a voice and is accepted as an equal member of the community. Instead of struggling alone, resorting to collective intelligence, problems of any kind are being solved more easily. In the end, as summarized in the Annual Reports, it is about attitudinal change in the individuals supported by technical skills and physical outcomes becoming the property of groups (*TCRS* 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2011, Benini 2008).

The interviewed staff members report once again a large number of cases of collective change. Perhaps the most important change experienced at the collective level is the creation of awareness and the consequent recognition of the marginalized, be that women, poor or disabled, as valuable individuals and

equal contributors in the community. Everyone's share is needed in gradually building up prosperity and wealth for the entire community:

"[...] but before, they were, even feel shy to get outside, because they have... they have no even good clothes to put on them, they feel shy even to the meeting, they cannot talk because they feel: 'I'm nobody, I can't contribute and nobody will listen to me'. But now, we can witness, they contribute. And the community itself recognizes them." (F6)

As a result of the collective change, women, traditionally having a subordinate role to men in many of the Muslim-dominated communities in Tanzania, are generally being accepted in leadership positions as representants of the entire community. Women are allowed and encouraged to speak in front of the community and to demand for their rights. More and more women now own property, a right which had for long been denied to them. This can be considered as an enormous change, as it is breaking taboos and directly clashing with the old traditions in some of the majorly patriarchal communities. In general, women are now more in control of their own life, more independent and self-standing, which is, in fact, supporting the definition of empowerment by Kabeer (2001), seen in the earlier chapters.

"The position of women in most of our communities were only to produce children, but not to own any property. So, women also were treated like some sort of a property in that house. But now women have come to realize: 'No!' They can even say [...] how to plan for their lives, even how to plan how many children they should have. So they can also have time to engage themselves in development work." (M8)

Even the most vulnerable members of the community – disabled or the poorest of the poor – previously lacking self-confidence and self-recognition, have now got a voice that they are no longer afraid to use, questioning the government and actively demanding for their rights.

“Some of them will tell you: ‘Before, [...] I were a shy person, I [...] feel like I’m not worth to be able to speak in front of people. But now, after I’ve been trained, I know who I am, I know my rights, I know the thing which the government or the village government has to do. I can go, I can even be active citizen, who is able to even contribute, to the meetings and development of the village in the larger picture.’”
(M15)

The trainings, besides the skills, have essentially given the marginalized the courage, the self-esteem and the self-worth, leading to the recognition of themselves as worthy human beings, just like anyone else in the community. Not only realizing their rights, but also their responsibilities as citizens, the marginalized are now actively contributing to the common good of the entire community.

5.2.6. Changes as Components or Catalysts of Empowerment

What is the common nominator between these material and non-material, individual and collective changes, and the phenomenon of empowerment itself? All the aforementioned changes can clearly and justifiably be, one way or another, considered as components or catalysts of empowerment. Indeed, in material terms, *income* seems often to be the trigger, the starting point for further changes both in material and non-material sense. Again, in non-material terms, acquiring basic *knowledge and skills* such as literacy can result in enormous developments both in the material well-being and in the bigger phenomenon of empowerment itself. Having a steady income and some basic skills can be considered so important for human beings in general, that they can even have a key role in determining the individual’s identity and self-worth.

Both in the staff interviews as well as in the reports, the leadership empowerment trainings are mentioned as the second, complementing part of the empowerment curriculum. However, it shall be questioned at this point whether the *leadership empowerment* is in the end more instrumental than genuine (cf. Swai 2010). We shall return to this aspect in the later chapters of the analysis.

6. FINDINGS 2 – CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT BEHIND THE INTERVENTION

In the second result chapter, I will present my findings related to the second research question: the essence of empowerment according to the agents. Like in the previous chapter, the findings are based on the analysis of both the secondary and primary data. In this chapter, I will differentiate more clearly between the genuine and instrumental empowerment, presenting the perceived characteristics of a genuinely empowered individual and a genuinely empowered community, then examining the role of TCRS in the process of empowerment, the sustainability of the experienced empowerment, and finally concluding the chapter by looking into the conditions and strategies for an ideal state of empowerment, as well as the perceived obstacles for empowerment.

6.1. Indicators of Empowerment

TCRS, like many other NGOs in the developing countries, is largely donor-dependent. Therefore, it needs to have some concrete, measurable outcomes and indicators of its community empowerment programs to show as a proof of work for the donors. Even though measuring a phenomenon as abstract and context-dependent as empowerment is challenging, as the empowerment process does not necessarily produce quantifiable results or “objectively verifiable indicators” (TCRS 2007b), the reports and official documents present a few aspects that can be considered as evaluative indicators of empowerment. It shall be pointed out, however, that these indicators represent the *instrumental* rather than *genuine* empowerment.

Both the parent organization LWF and TCRS itself underline the cyclic structure of the empowerment curriculum, making it easier to grasp and measure. The cycle starts from an initial situation analysis, followed by action planning and resource mobilization, leading to implementation and final evaluation (“plan – action – reflection”). Indeed, planning and the implementation of plans seem to have a crucial role in measuring empowerment: the capability of implementing

the projects on their own is stated as the most important criterion for the final graduation from the empowerment curriculum (TCRS 2004, 2012, LWF 2004).

As a rule, the indicators and ways to measure empowerment are rather abstract and always context-dependent, varying between the different target communities and even between the individuals within the same community. On a more general level, TCRS measures the success of empowerment by comparing the objectives listed in the Country Strategy¹⁴ with a set of indicators, such as increased attendance of the marginalized in the village meetings; Village Action Plans published on a regular basis; improved public services, and improved housing standards (LWF 2004).

The regular evaluations conducted both by TCRS local staff and by external evaluation teams have praised the successful outcomes of the CEPs, manifested in particular in the *positive attitudes* and *increased action* of the community members. Indeed, according to the evaluation reports and the general empowerment guidelines by LWF, empowerment is reflected among others in increased confidence and self-respect; independence; improved skills and competencies; capacity to carry on and support their own development; common understanding; taking initiative; improved communication and management skills of the leaders, as well as the discovery and active exercise of the rights of the marginalized (LWF 2004, 2008, TCRS 2010b, Benini 2008).

6.2. Genuine Understanding of Empowerment

Formal indicators and instrumental understandings of empowerment aside, what does the phenomenon of *empowerment* mean to the TCRS staff? When asked to describe the concept of empowerment in their own words and on a general level, the interviewees often emphasized it being a *long-term process of*

¹⁴ Cf. the three main objectives of the CEP: 1. *Communities have more active citizens with more transparent, competent and accountable leaders*; 2. *Marginalized people in target villages improve their economic security through sustainable livelihoods*; 3. *Marginalized people in target villages increase their access to public services which secure adequate quality of life* (TCRS 2007b, LWF 2004).

change, where the individuals or the entire community are being brought from one level to another level, either in material or non-material, more mental terms:

"[...] process which creates awareness to the community, to be able to use their available resources to achieve their goals [...] Through empowerment, you are made to think, to think and rethink [...]" (F6)

Empowerment is seen as a process of self-recognition and self-awareness, whereby the individuals become aware of the present situation, their identity and their environment. This, in turn, helps them to realize their potentials, the possibilities around them and the available resources surrounding them in order to achieve their goals and to reach well-being. Empowerment enables the individuals to better understand what they need to do themselves in order to develop. In fact, empowerment is essentially the necessary catalyst for a bigger change, for the further development of the community:

"Without empowerment, nothing can be changed." (F6)

"If he's not empowered, he cannot do anything." (F11)

Empowerment is to build and strengthen the (mental) capacities of the individuals, so that they will have the knowledge and the skills to achieve their goals on their own, to become active and participate fully in their own development, giving out their ideas and taking initiatives for an improvement. Characteristic to empowerment is *independency*, being able to act on their own, not depending on an external force:

"Empowerment to me is just to hand over the stick to the people, so that they can move on their own [...] To move on their own without external assistant, or TCRS assistant, yeah, that is empowerment." (M10)

"So my concept of empowerment is enabling, giving the capacity, giving them power, to do something on their own [...] An enabling sort of thing, is a facilitation,

our process to facilitate the process of these people being confident in what they're doing and also be able to know what they can do [...]" (M14)

"[...] to give people knowledge and skills ... to put their skills, their knowledge, their resources into better use [...]" (M15)

The highlighted role of *trainings* and *education* as a crucial part of empowerment is striking. Education, expanded knowledge and a number of new acquired skills were seen by the interviewees as a key factor in the process of empowerment:

"When you train, means you empower people." (M8)

In fact, the role of education and training is given so much emphasis, that it seems like some of the interviewees understand the trainings as a synonym of the phenomenon of empowerment itself, rather than as one of its prerequisites:

"We have empowered them how to use the safe water." (F7)

It is noticeable how nearly all of the interviewees used the verb *to empower* in the active form, TCRS being the subject and the target groups being the passive objects of the action of empowerment. As it has been rightly argued by some of the empowerment theorists (cf. e.g. Siitonen 2000), it is questionable whether genuine empowerment can be transferred to someone, as it is an innate process occurring in the individual's mind. However, it is likely that the verb *empower* was used by some of the interviewees as a synonym of the verb *train* merely for the sake of convenience, as the essence of such sentences was, in fact, the verb complement ("*how to use the safe water*"), and not so much the verb ("*we have empowered*") itself.

An interesting point of view was brought up by a few of the interviewees, who consider empowerment as an addition, added value in the community, complementing the already existing human capital in the community:

“[...] to empower the individual, or the community [...] they have something which they know, but through empowerment [...] is like to addition, to add something for the community.” (F13)

“Because in any community, there are what we call life-giving forces. The communities, although they are poor, but they have something which is very positive, that has made them to be what they are. [...] They may have not been developed that much, but they have some... resilience. They have their own coping mechanisms within the communities, which have made them to be what they are. So, talk to them, look for those positive things, and then start to build from those.” (M8)

These comments remind us of the point of view of Sadan (2004), suggesting that the seed of empowerment already exists within every individual (or community) as a kind of natural energy or potential. The trainings act as a catalyst for this potential, releasing it and bringing it to its full bloom.

Empowerment is an inclusive process that belongs to everyone: everyone can be empowered and everyone has a role to play in their own development. Empowerment can have several phases and levels, and, as emphasized by one of the interviewees, it must always start from the individuals. Therefore, before any collective form of empowerment is possible, it is necessary that the individuals be empowered.

In fact, the changes and the consequent empowerment experienced by the individuals are, according to one of the interviewed staff members, automatically reflected in the bigger community:

“[...] it's the people, the individuals within a geographical set-up, that forms the bigger community. So, if there are changes within the individuals, then automatically there are changes within the bigger community, because it's these same people who now form the bigger community.” (M8)

However, empowerment can and often will have a different form, or be of a different level, when experienced on a collective level. Could it even be that the collective form of empowerment, community empowerment, is more than the sum of its parts? Could it be that community empowerment means something taking place on an even deeper level than that of individual empowerment? This shall be pondered upon more thoroughly in the next paragraphs.

6.3. Characteristics of an Empowered Individual

According to the interviewees, an empowered individual can be described essentially as someone being active, taking initiative, participating and contributing to their own development. An empowered individual is in control of their own life, independent from others and able to *“determine their own destiny”* (M14).

Empowerment gives self-confidence and self-esteem to deal with any problems in the lives of the individuals. An empowered person is willing to learn more and also teach the others. Having experienced empowerment, the individual has been brought from one level to another, e.g. from being poor to having a stable income. The individual feels enlightened, ready to face the challenges and look at their life from the outside to see what is needed for further improvement and development. Empowered individual has the knowledge and the skills – like a *“software in their head”* (M10) – and in general, the empowered individual is on a more advanced level than before. If, for example, the individual used to be marginalized, with empowerment, they have climbed up to a higher mental level and are now on the same level with any other member in the community, recognizing their own value:

“[...] and they will be empowered to an extent that now they will stand and be like the other normal members of the community [...] We are also at that level that even the marginalized and the other normal people can sit together in a meeting, and be able to equally share their thoughts.” (M14)

According to one interviewee, an empowered individual is able to do something that previously failed. In fact, this feeling of success, the feeling of having successfully achieved something where they previously were unsuccessful, will surely give more encouragement for the individual to continue the same way, and is likely to lead to an even deeper experience of empowerment.

Empowered individual is able to think to the future and see the big picture, not only with regard to their own life, but also in terms of the surroundings, contributing to the common good and development of the entire community. Empowered individual has the awareness and the understanding of their worth, and has the courage to stand up for their rights and demand the same rights as any other human being.

All the above characteristics can be considered to be of rather *genuine empowerment*. Indeed, these characteristics have emerged as a result of a change in the mindset of the individuals starting from within, rather than brought about by an external agent. In contrast, in most cases when describing an empowered leader, the interviewees mentioned characteristics that, in my view, seemed rather to be of what Swai (2004) refers to as *instrumental empowerment*.

An empowered leader, according to the interviewed staff members, is following the principles of good governance having clear impacts on the community. An empowered leader is accountable and transparent, communicates the results of the decisions to the community, conducts regular meetings and does effective code-keeping. As a result of empowerment, the leaders prepare and implement village action plans and actively seek more external funding.

These descriptions can be considered instrumental, as they all correspond to the pre-set criteria, requirements and more quantifiably measurable indicators determined by external agents. Instead of being something emerging from within, the above characteristics are rather something coming from the outside, learned actions and behavioral changes. To be able to determine whether or not there

has been empowerment on a more genuine level, it is necessary to look deeper inside the minds of the leaders, with regard to their attitudes and values.

6.4. Characteristics of an Empowered Community

While the interviewees were rather easily able to identify some key characteristics defining an empowered individual, it seemed more problematic to define an empowered community, the ultimate goal of the Community Empowerment Programs. Indeed, sometimes the interviewees referred to the stage of *graduation*, the final stage of the CEPs, whereby they listed some criteria and indicators that they had, understandably, assumed from the strategies and programs of the NGO. These indicators fall, however, in the category of *instrumental* rather than *genuine* empowerment.

Seen through this “instrumental lense”, an empowered community is e.g. making action plans and actively implementing the plans, measuring their achievements, keeping regular meetings, using their resources more effectively and using social services. It shall be argued that these kinds of characteristics are instrumental, as they put largely emphasis on the quantitative aspects of a potential change, reflecting primarily some newly acquired behaviors, instead of more in-depth attitudinal changes. Having said that, as also discussed earlier, a behavior change such as starting to use the dispensary instead of going to the witch doctor can also reflect a deeper change in the mindset of the individuals.

An empowered community was also said to be characterized by improved infrastructure, improved housing, improved health facilities and better access to social services. These material improvements do not directly have to do with the mindset of the individuals or the collective, but will most likely act as catalysts for empowerment at a later stage. In fact, material improvements in the lives of the formerly marginalized can give a feeling of well-being and comfort, which are essential ingredients in building up self-esteem, a characteristic of an empowered individual.

A *genuinely* empowered community, just like the individual, is independent, not depending on any external support but able to manage on their own, self-motivated and able to independently face and solve whatever problems they might encounter. Empowered community is active, with everyone participating and contributing equally to the common good, the importance of hard work being commonly recognized:

“Through empowerment, they recognize, if you can’t work hard, you will be poor forever. So you have to take initiative to work hard to change your life. So they work hard.” (F6)

An empowered community is generally characterized by a strong team spirit, positive group dynamics and unity. The community works actively together and participates in the building up of development with the final aim being to achieve the common good. The importance of collaboration is thus acknowledged, whereby the community recognizes the human value of each and every member of the collective – the marginalized, women and disabled included – allowing and encouraging them to participate in the common activities and decision-making:

“The important change is value... valuing the others, for example the disabled, or the marginalized, to be valued by others.” (M10)

As for women, previously accepting the subordinate role to men, they are now “waking up”, becoming aware of their rights and standing up for themselves. Women are taking more initiative, contesting and being elected to leadership positions, and generally having a better status with respect to men. In an empowered community, women and men, poor and better off are mixing together, no one being left out. Men are also accepting women in leadership positions, and allowing them to try their wings, to be more independent and in control of their own life. In fact, this change of attitudes in men can be considered as a spillover or snowball effect: even though not directly taking part in the CEP trainings, men are learning from women, by their teachings and just by observing them. Moreover, very successful individuals, e.g. women having

started their own business or taken up leadership positions, are considered as role models, appreciated and “imitated” by the other members of the community. Thus, it shall be argued that in a community with positive group dynamics, empowerment will spread rather easily. The question is whether or not this spillover effect happens rather spontaneously, or if it requires a catalyst, or an active “pulling force” to direct it. This question, as well as other empowerment enablers shall be treated further in the following paragraphs.

The description of an empowered community by one of the interviewee, elaborate and genuine, deserves to be treated separately. According to the interviewee, empowered community is essentially characterized by *effectiveness*: the community, having the right tools of analysis, is able to determine the pros and cons of any action before doing it and therefore to have more sustainable projects, plans and resolutions:

“So ideally any empowered community is a community where you’ll have really effective people who will participate in their own development, people who can plan, people who can resolve, people who can effectively participate, and basically you see development. [...] and you’ll find people are really... living in harmony.” (M8)

In my personal experience, the last phrase of the above commentary perfectly describes the general atmosphere in an empowered community: with empowerment, there is a general feeling of *harmony* in the community, which can involve e.g. ideas of democracy, collaboration, general acceptance, mutual support and appreciation, as well as peace and serenity. The feeling of harmony can also happen in the mind of an individual, but it shall be argued that it will be even stronger within a collective.

In sum, a genuinely empowered community is an active, dynamic and harmonious collective with egalitarian and democratic values, having initiative and being able to survive on its own, without depending on external support. Characteristic to an empowered community is also its contagiousness: the

empowerment of an individual, or of an entire community, often spreads around and inspires other individuals and communities as well:

“Because, when you speak of communities, we don’t want to have dormant community, we want to have active citizens, citizens who know ‘this is right – this is wrong’, citizens who can see that ‘this is a problem, we want to address it’. Ideal, empowered community, it’s self-aware community, or community which knows and have values, a community which are able to make the decision on their own, a community where you can see [...] even as individuals, growth, and they come more aware, more analytical, they are more participatory, or active citizens and... are able to even inspire and bring changes to other people! Because a very effective empowered community will always have this terminology which is called the spillover effect. It can’t just be by itself.” (M15)

Therefore, going back to the question raised in the earlier paragraph and to take further Eklund’s (1999) observation on the cumulative nature of community empowerment, I shall argue that the collective form of empowerment, whenever genuine and sustainable, is actually more than the sum of its parts, i.e. something more than the combined empowerment of the individuals within the community. To give a concrete example, we shall compare the spread of empowerment to the knowledge transfer between the villagers. As explained by one of the interviewed community members, once a trained individual passes the learned knowledge on to the other community members, it often happens that those being trained “second-hand” will build up an even larger knowledge base than the person having had “first-hand” training, as a result of the accumulation of knowledge, whereby the already existing knowledge of both the trained and the non-trained individuals together is complemented by the new knowledge acquired in the trainings. Therefore, it is possible that the second hand-trained individual even exceeds the first-hand trained individual in their knowledge base. In sum, on a collective level, empowerment becomes self-feeding and self-expanding, spilling over to its surroundings, and also having effects not necessarily found solely on the individual level, such as the idea of harmony, democracy and equality.

6.5. TCRS's Role in the Process of Empowerment

TCRS obviously has a key role in the empowerment process of the communities. In fact, it is likely that empowerment would have never occurred without TCRS and the CEPs. What exactly is TCRS's role in the process? In the beginning, TCRS, as an external agent, works as the initiator, the first spark or the trigger of the empowerment process by creating general awareness and making the individuals wake up and realize their situation. This is the case at least for the first individuals being empowered, as at a later stage, empowerment becomes more like a self-feeding process spreading from one individual to another and later also to the level of the entire community. By offering the facilities, the trainings and the material support, TCRS is creating an enabling environment for the empowerment to occur. TCRS can therefore be considered as an *enabler*, or *facilitator* of empowerment. Indeed, TCRS is not forcing, not coercing and not deciding for the empowerment of someone without their consent, which, for that matter, would not even be possible. TCRS can only offer the spark for the empowerment for those who are willing to accept it, while the actual process of empowerment itself is something beyond TCRS's control.

At a certain stage, when the community meets the pre-set criteria for *graduation*, and when it can in other words be considered *empowered* according to the understanding of TCRS, the formal CEP curriculum as well as the trainings come to an end and TCRS pulls out of the target communities. At this stage, in addition to meeting the mainly material and rather straightforward criteria and indicators treated earlier in the study, the community is, also on a non-material level, considered to be independent, confident and ready to continue on its own.

At the stage of graduation, as emphasized by most of the interviewees, even if the official training program is over, it is important not to abandon the target villages completely. Indeed, training activities minimized, the relationship with the community is still being actively maintained by regular follow-up visits. Even after the graduation, whenever needed, TCRS will continue to offer support for

the communities in the form of advice, consultation and possibly also material support.

The regular follow-up visits to the communities serve for two purposes: firstly to maintain the good relationships with the community, avoiding them thus feeling abandoned, and secondly to monitor and measure the potential changes for reporting them for the donors. However, the role of TCRS after graduation is not only a *monitor* as such, but the relationship between TCRS and the communities can rather be compared to that of a *foster parent* and a child:

“If we graduate and decide to move out of that village, we say we have not graduated relationships, we keep the relationships. So, we become like a foster, a foster parent relationship.” (M8)

“The role of TCRS is that first should be more as supporter. It should move from being an active interventionist, just like a parent – your child has moved away, he or she is staying on her own, or his own, but there are always problems; sometimes they have this kind of problem, they can be able to come back to you, and say ‘I have 123, what should I do?’; you tell them what to do – so, it should be moved from the active organization in the intervention, to a certain role of being more as an observer and adviser.” (M15)

Even though at the end of the CEP, the field staff leaves the village and TCRS is no longer physically present, the voluntary workers, the Area Facilitators and the Volunteer Animators, community representatives trained as the members of the TCRS staff, remain in the village, acting as a channel of communication between the village and TCRS. This will ensure both that the community will not lose connection to TCRS and *vice versa*, and that the projects and activities started during the trainings will continue to be implemented also in the future.

Despite the formal criteria and indicators, determining when a community is ready for graduation is rarely straightforward. In fact, as stated by one of the interviewees, the community members may not always be truthful when

describing their experiences on the trainings. In fear of being abandoned and left alone by TCRS, the community members might underestimate their readiness and pretend to be on a lower level of development than what they actually are. However, if a community is afraid of remaining alone – no matter how much improvement there has been in terms of infrastructure, social services, housing and general well-being, all measured by quantifiable indicators – can it then be considered independent, confident and genuinely empowered? Behavior like untruthfulness points to the immature development of self-esteem and possibly also other mental capacities, despite the seemingly advanced level of development in some other, more superficial aspects. In such cases, it is appropriate to reconsider the graduation criteria and allow more time for the empowerment process.

In sum, TCRS is a crucial factor and the key player for the empowerment process of the communities. During the process, the role of TCRS changes from being the initiator, enabler or facilitator of empowerment, to being a foster taker, mentor, advisor or an outside observer of the community. During the entire process, TCRS purposely keeps a certain distance, in order to avoid building up a dependency syndrome with the community, while at the same time dealing with the community at the grass-root level, in order to avoid being considered as an authority or an institution, which would most likely lead to feelings of subordination and inferiority from the part of the community. As emphasized by the interviewees, TCRS is not force-feeding empowerment to the communities, but will always work with them starting from the very needs and requirements defined by the communities themselves.

6.6. Sustainability

The sustainability of the empowerment triggered by CEPs is largely determined by its “form”, i.e. whether it can be considered instrumental or genuine. Instrumental empowerment *per se* is less likely to sustain than the genuine empowerment, as it is, in fact, pre-determined and aimed to meet a number of quantifiably measurable criteria. It is possible, however – and often so happens – that with time, the initially instrumental empowerment may become more

genuine and thus also more sustainable. This is the case of e.g. material improvements, such as a better income later leading to a better self-esteem and a feeling of independence, which will remain in the minds of the individuals and is thus also sustainable. On the other hand, as discussed earlier, the genuinity and sustainability of the empowered leadership reflected in e.g. more effective code-keeping and organizing regular meetings, is questionable.

Whenever genuine, empowerment is generally well sustainable in the CEP target communities. Factors contributing to sustainability are, according to the interviewees, firstly to allow enough time for the empowerment process. When giving the trainings, it is important to take into account that different individuals have different learning abilities, some adopting new skills faster, others slower. The time allocated for the trainings shall therefore be adjusted to support the needs of both the early adapters and the slow learners.

Secondly, each and every member of the community shall be encouraged from the very beginning of the CEP project to participate and be involved. This way, the community will assume ownership of the project, making it *their own* project, not a TCRS (or any other NGO for that matter) project. Ownership, in turn, aims e.g. at making the project as a normal, routine work for the community, which will then ensure its continuity:

“But community empowerment, it includes also for them to know that this is their project, and everybody has their role to play in there. So this is our approach, inclusiveness. Everybody is going to benefit from that type of intervention, must participate effectively in it and own the process themselves. And this is very essential for sustainability of the interventions.” (M14)

“We have typical examples of projects where they were started by the government, people were not involved, and they will always refer to these projects as the ‘government project’. But go to our projects where TCRS has facilitated the communities. They don’t call those ‘TCRS projects’. They will always say: ‘our

project' – it's theirs. It's the community's projects. It's not TCRS'. And I think there's where we have really scored.” (M8)

TCRS shall stand by the community throughout the project; give special support with the first steps in the form of trainings, and continue supporting the community also after the graduation with regular follow-up checks. The community is encouraged to form associations and small groups for enabling the continuation of the activities and practices learned in the trainings.

As emphasized by many of the interviewees, if and when the trainings have been effective, the community will have truly adopted the knowledge and the skills to the point that they will be able to apply the skills in practice. Thus, the knowledge and the skills will remain in the community even when the trainings have ended:

“So, actually, sustainability will always be there, because once you train these people, it sticks in their minds. So when you move, you go to other villages, you don't move their knowledge. This is a good thing with trainings, that once you train people, when you move out from those villages, the trainings and the knowledge and the skills they remain with the people. So they just move ahead with their lives and that's what we refer to as sustainability.” (M8)

Skills, knowledge and awareness are non-material substances that will continue to be part of the human capital of the community longer than any material substances. Genuine empowerment, by definition, is therefore more sustainable than instrumental empowerment, focused on more superficial achievements and material changes:

“Because, to me sustainability is not the buildings, but [...] the systems and the structures. If there is transparency, then that system of being transparent, accountable to the people should continue. To me that's what's sustainability.” (M8)

As discussed earlier, TCRS chooses representatives from the villages, trains them the same way as the other TCRS staff and nominates them as Volunteer Animators. These Volunteer Animators can be considered as one of the key contributors to the sustainability of empowerment, as they will remain in the community even after TCRS has formally pulled out. Volunteer Animators will for their part ensure the continuity of the learned practices by encouraging the other community members to keep up with the activities and also by offering them guidance and support. Volunteer Animators, highly respected and appreciated by the villagers, act as role models for the rest of the community, encouraging participation and involvement of everyone. In fact, could it be that the Volunteer Animators are the first and maybe also the strongest cases of empowerment, acting as catalysts for the empowerment of the other community members? At any rate, it shall be concluded that the strong, genuine empowerment of the Volunteer Animators will contribute to and possibly also strengthen the experienced empowerment of the other community members.

In addition to the voluntary workers, TCRS also collaborates with the local government and district departments, linking them together with the villages and the adopted CEP activities. TCRS is therefore not changing the governmental or administrative structures of the village, but rather strengthening and complementing the already existing structures with the new activities brought about by the introduction of the CEPs. Therefore, even when TCRS leaves, the local government, with the new adopted practices, remains in the village, enabling the continuation of the learned activities and thus ensuring the sustainability.

6.7. Conditions for Empowerment

Empowerment will not occur automatically in just any kind of setting. According to the interviewees, certain conditions are crucial for enabling empowerment. Firstly, the empowerment process should take place in an allowing atmosphere open to changes and new ideas. It also has to be given enough time, as empowerment is, essentially, about changing mindsets and attitudes. In many

cases, it is not a question of material conditions, as it is possible that the community already possesses an abundance of resources, but simply does not know how to use them effectively. Therefore, the community members have to be made aware to be able to realize the situation. Usually, this “awakening” is done by a *change agent*, the one to initiate and promote the process of empowerment:

“There have to be something to promote it, it can’t occur anywhere. There have to be someone to push it, someone to push that empowerment. Like someone who’s leader there to push that empowerment, or someone to speak [for] that empowerment.” (F7)

The change agents can be of two types. The leaders – either village leaders, religious leaders, or even Volunteer Animators as discussed in the earlier chapters; generally people whose opinion matters in the community – have a key role in the process of empowerment, as they are the ones to “lead empowerment”; they either become empowered first and serve as an example or model to the community, or by their acceptance, allowing attitude and encouragement push the community towards empowerment – or even both. The empowerment leaders have to be open for a change, or the empowerment will not occur. If, for example, a religious leader is opposing women’s literacy trainings, it, and consequently women’s empowerment will not take place, as the word of the religious leaders often is comparable to the law in the community. The second type of change agents are the people ready and willing to change. In the case of community empowerment, it is crucial that every member of the community recognizes the need for a change, is involved and participates accordingly:

“And also to create an enabling environment for this type of empowerment to take place [...] First of all you must have some leadership, which is committed to change, which has soft support for the downtrodden. And we must also have some people, the poorest of the poor, who are ready to change. If they are just fine with what they are, they cannot have the empowerment process done.” (M14)

“One of the very important conditions for empowerment to happen, you need change agents, you need people. We need people who know that there should be a change. And by people, I don’t only mean individuals; it could be even organizations, like TCRS. [...] So our, say, very important conditions is to have individuals and organizations who are as change agents, they know that there must be change, they need to bring change, a certain desired change.” (M15)

Empowerment is not a forced activity: if the people are not willing to change, there will not be empowerment either. Empowerment will only occur if the change agents are genuinely ready and willing to accept new ideas, attitudes and behavior:

“[...] there’s this example of taking a dog to a river: the dog may go up to the river, and there’s water, and maybe say: ‘I don’t want to drink’ – you can’t force it. Once it’s the same with people, you may go somewhere and these people say: ‘We are very comfortable the way we are. We don’t want to be empowered, we’re already powerful, we don’t want to be empowered anymore.’ Then the empowerment, regardless of how good it is, regardless of how well-funded it is, regardless of how committed are the change agents, nothing will ever happen. But if you have people, who are – they may not be able to comprehend everything about empowerment – ready to learn, then you have a chance of empowerment working.” (M15)

6.7.1. Strategies for Empowerment

When discussing the ideal strategies to achieve empowerment, the interviewees emphasized the importance of two main factors: *education* and *participation*. Related to the initial awareness, one of the conditions of empowerment, education and the consequent knowledge will give the individuals self-worth and confidence, which will contribute to the overall experience of empowerment. Thus, education – capacity-building – can be seen as a catalyst for empowerment:

“So, the bottom line was actually the trainings.” (M8)

“Only thing lacking is education: resources already there, just need to know how to use them! I think the best strategy... is to build capacity. The only thing for empowerment is capacity-building.” (F11)

In addition to the education, essential for empowerment according to the interviewees is participation. Equal participation and involvement of every member of the community is crucial in the process of genuine empowerment. The community members are encouraged to participate in the projects from day one: from planning and design to the final implementation of the activities. The interviewees highlighted that the approach of TCRS is always bottom-up: TCRS will not decide on behalf of the community, as it is the community itself who knows their problems the best:

“I’m referring to a participation where communities are asked: what are the priorities, what are the challenges in your communities? And what do you think are the possible solutions to these challenges? Because they know their areas very well than we, outsiders. They know their areas!” (M8)

“The best strategies: involvement of the community, and allowing to participate, encouraging the participation of the beneficiaries. We do with them, not to do for them – allow them to participate.” (M10)

Ideally, by involving the community and encouraging each of its members to participate, they will assume ownership, which, as we have seen earlier; will support continuity and sustainability of the empowerment:

“The best approach is just to involve people. To involve people, because the problem in the community is THEIR problem. So, we should involve them, and [...] facilitate the process by identifying their problems, and find the solution. You don’t need our always... or we, as external, to find a solution, or find problem for them [...] Just better to make them participate in identifying their problem, and find the way how to alleviate it. Because this is really them to think.... the problem is theirs, and they plan themselves, and implement. So, we can create sense of ownership for the

community. I think the best approach is: start within the grass-root, to involve and make them participate in the whole process.” (M9)

6.8. Empowerment Obstacles

As we have seen, empowerment will not occur automatically, but is in the end a rather sensitive process. When asked about the potential obstacles to empowerment, the interviewees were quite unanimous about the *lack of time* being the biggest hindrance to the process of empowerment. If not given enough time, empowerment will not be able to become “ripe”, but it will remain “premature”, which can lead into confusion. Indeed, after having been introduced the CEPs, the community members usually develop high expectations about the project, ready to change and to let go of some of the old attitudes and concepts. If the process is cut off abruptly, the community being left in a state where it is still looking for new directions, the end result will surely be worse than the initial situation:

“Some places it happened in the early years of the empowerment process, [...] but I would say that was not because of the weakness of the communities, I think it was some weakness on the part of TCRS. We didn’t have enough time to stay there [...] You’re supposed to be there five years, you’ve done some interventions for two years, or three years, it’s premature, it’s not yet ripe, and you’re leaving the place, definitely you come back there it’s a disaster.” (M14)

Two somewhat contrasting views about the success of community empowerment can be found in the interviews. According to some, as we have seen in the previous paragraph, the full, genuine empowerment will only take place if the conditions and initial requirements are met; while according to others, due to the different levels and learning capabilities of the individuals, the empowerment process may not be even and uniform, but if given enough time, will always eventually lead into full, genuine empowerment of the entire community.

“The speed of people adopting the trainings differs from one individual to another. Or from one community to another depends, because [...] for example one village X, the adoption can be different from village Y. But, where it has not worked well; no, we don’t have those situations. We don’t have communities where we have gone with our training materials or old curriculum and then they rejected. No. In all the places where we went, people will always say, they thought those were the most important things that they missed in their lives.” (M8)

“They are quick learners, early adaptors, while the others, they are waiting to notice what their first adaptor has been doing, how has she or he succeeded. And then, that late adaptor will learn from the early adaptor. So, they are just moving at different levels, and different success. [...] You cannot see people are moving at equal percentage; they differ.” (M10)

Either way, besides lack of time, *defiant attitude* was mentioned as another obstacle to empowerment. This can have several aspects and meanings. For instance, as we have seen, rejecting the trainings will not lead to empowerment, as empowerment is not a forced action and will only emerge from free will. Rejection can occur both from the part of the village leaders or the community members themselves. Indeed, even if the community would be willing to change, if the village leader opposes, no one in the community will be empowered:

“[...] religious leaders, [...] these are the kind of people, [...] their opinion really matters to the successful project, because if they say no, you might have a very good project idea, but it won’t function simply because they’re just opposing your project.” (M15)

As for the community members, there can be several reasons for rejection, why some people *“just want the fish”*, instead of *“learning how to fish”* (M12). Firstly, as is common for the human mind, the new and unknown – change – can be considered as a threat:

“People who have over the years built their own standard of resilience; this is how things are, you know, they don’t want to change! Change to them is dangerous. And that for every human being, some change, especially that which you didn’t envisage, is dangerous, you’re going to be put [in] some vulnerable situation we never expected. So people just want to go to with what they know.” (M15)

Secondly, in some cases the community members do not have belief in themselves or in a better future, so that they have given up all hope and will not even bother to try:

“That time they said: ‘Oh, we are born like this, so we cannot change. We are born like this, we are poor; we don’t have food, we don’t have plenty area for cultivation... We are like this!’” (F11)

Thirdly, sometimes the community members simply do not find the time to take on the CEP trainings, as their daily routines are largely conditioned by the agricultural activities, their main livelihood:

“It depends also with the season, and availability of a person. If you’re conducting a training during the agriculture season, you’ll not find many people coming to attend training.” (F11)

Finally, sometimes the community members have unrealistic expectations about the project, whereby they expect to see immediate material changes, to receive a financial reward for attending the trainings, or just generally expect someone to create development for them. The latter can, in fact, also be related to historical factors. For example, in the district of Kilwa, having a history of slavery and Arab domination, the local communities are, to a certain extent, still affected by the past, whereby their mentality can sometimes be considered rather passive, even phlegmatic, not willing to work hard for a change. In such a challenging context, the empowerment requires even more time and encouragement than in some other, more open locations.

In addition to the defiant attitudes, another, somewhat related obstacle brought up by the interviewees was the so-called *dependency syndrome*. Ideally, empowerment results in independence and self-confidence, whereby the communities are able and willing to work for their development on their own. On the contrary, in a dependent state, the community is insecure to survive on its own, and afraid to cut the umbilical cord to its supporter, in this case TCRS, the initiator of the empowerment process. In a situation of dependency syndrome, the empowerment will, therefore, reach only an incomplete or a superficial state:

“Some people still have dependency, as you can say, dependency syndrome. Although they are attending empowerment [trainings], but they expect something from you. Some people, if you conduct trainings, they claim allowance... You know, you go there in order to train them, for their benefits, but some people refuse to attend trainings because you didn’t give them some money. He didn’t understand that [it] is beneficial for himself.” (M9)

The fourth major obstacle for empowerment was, according to the interviewees, certain *cultural barriers, old traditions and taboos*. Indeed, in a relatively conservative and largely religious country such as Tanzania, many old traditions are still guiding the lives of the individuals, affecting their norms, behavior codes and moral perceptions. In such a context, anything new or contradictory to these norms and moral rules will not be easily accepted and assumed. Therefore, for instance women’s empowerment will be challenging, as women are traditionally holding a status subordinate to that of men:

“Because we understand that in our communities women are not empowered, and also some of the cultural barriers actually prohibit the women of becoming active members in their own development. [...] In terms of for example women being able to stand before men, because, most of the cultures, especially the African cultures, and particularly for Tanzania, in most cases, some religions and taboos, or cultural backgrounds, have really made women, in such a way that women were not allowed even to stand and talk before men” (M8)

7. FINDINGS 3 – POWER RELATIONS AND EMPOWERMENT

The third and the final result chapter shall focus on the concept of power, the *ability to make a difference*, or the *process of becoming of identity having a circular structure*, as suggested by Bech Dyrberg (1997), guiding the analysis of the present study. In this chapter, I shall firstly present the findings related to the third research question: the perceived changes in the internal power relations triggered by the empowerment intervention. Power relations were chosen as the focus of the analysis, as they offer a concrete point of view to the understanding of the otherwise rather abstract concept of power, presenting a “convergence zone” of the concepts of *power* and *empowerment*. Finally, the latter, concluding part of the chapter shall take further the circular view on power, attempting to outline the sources of emergence of power, as well as to apply the circular structure to the concept of empowerment.

7.1. Power Relations in the Community before and after Empowerment

In general terms, power relations represent the distribution of power between the individuals in a specific location. Ideally, according to the Western democratic values, power is distributed as equally as possible, in which case the power relations are less clearly visible to the outside. This kind of equal power distribution is, however, extremely rare in reality, and practically all of the modern societies are characterized by a varying number of different power relations.

In the case of the present analysis, the data shows that the Community Empowerment Programs affect the inner power relations of the community on three levels: firstly, the level of the community leaders and the community members; secondly, the level of the marginalized and the rest of the community, and finally, the level of the men and the women. Each of these levels shall be examined separately in the following.

7.1.1. Power Relations between the Community Leaders and the Community Members

The first level of power relations, that between the community leaders and the community members can further be divided into two categories: firstly, the power relations between the leaders and the marginalized, and secondly, the power relations between the leaders and the rest of the community members.

The fact that the CEP trainings are directed to two separate target groups explicitly marks the division between two social groups within the community, the marginalized and the community leaders. Indeed, according to TCRS's principles, the marginalized need to be empowered to be more aware of their rights to achieve more leverage, while the leaders need empowerment in order to become more transparent and accountable towards the villagers. As a result of the trainings, the marginalized community members become more encouraged to act, approach their leaders and demand for improvements in the governance in terms of e.g. follow-ups of the allocation of public funds (TCRS 2004, 2008, 2011, 2012).

"[...] the community may be demanding something to the leaders. You can raise their voices, [...] or they can demand the expenditure report, of what they've done. They can demand maybe improvement, or they can question their leaders publically." (M12)

"Because these people are marginalized, part of the component of the empowerment is also to enable them to speak! And also demand their rights. So, after training of three-four-five years, we can reach a level where the leadership and the marginalized people, they're now able to speak the same language of rights-based approach, and accountability of course." (M14)

As the latter commentary shows ("*they're now able to speak the same language*"), the fact that the power relations are evolving and changing in the community as a result of the trainings does not mean that someone loses their power when another one gains it. Indeed, gaining power in the community is not a zero-sum

game, but the overall power rather expands: in addition to including the leaders, the power now expands to also reach the marginalized, who, therefore, will not pose a threat to the power status of the leaders, as the power will still remain in their hands even after the gain of power by the marginalized.

Secondly, it can be assumed that the non-marginalized, better-off villagers are, to a certain extent, already aware of their rights, and are therefore not considered to be part of the direct target group of the trainings. However, their relation to the leaders will also improve as a result of the empowerment trainings, whereby the leaders become more transparent, and the entire community more involved in the decision-making processes, the citizens actively using their voting power to dismiss corrupt leaders (TCRS 2004, 2008, 2011, 2012). Even though, as we have seen in the earlier results chapter, it is questionable whether the trainings can be considered to lead to a true, genuine experience of empowerment in the minds of the leaders, it is clear that the power relations are indeed changing as a result of the leadership empowerment trainings:

"[...] through the implementation of this governance project, the public expenditure tracking system, because it was really giving information and power to the very normal people, some of the marginalized people, they're even now able to question the government, the local, the village government, as 'yeah, we have been giving you money, how do you use our money?'" (M15)

7.1.2. Power Relations between the Marginalized and the Rest of the Community

The second level of power relationships defines the relations between the extremely vulnerable and marginalized villagers, and the rest of the community members. It is assumed by TCRS that the marginalized are the ones especially in need of empowerment, as without realizing their human value and potential, they would not be able to achieve improvements required for their development. The marginalized are the worst off of the entire community, in the margin of the society, with little or no options to develop. The marginalized are often not respected or acknowledged by the community, whereby they are not able to enjoy even the basic human rights.

As a result of the empowerment trainings, the power relations between the marginalized and the rest of the community will become less visible. On the one hand, the marginalized will become more aware of their value and human rights, encouraging them to stand up for themselves and demand for their rights, to participate in the community activities and decision-making. On the other hand, the community members will begin to recognize the marginalized as important human beings, feeling the responsibility to take care of those who cannot cope on their own. Moreover, the community accepts the participation of the marginalized in the common activities, and encourages them to take part in the decision-making processes:

“It does change. Not only because they have better income and better educated, but they’re also more aware of their positions in the communities.” (M15)

As for the rest of the community members, it is assumed that they have already acquired some knowledge, skills or self-confidence even without the empowerment trainings and are therefore better positioned in the first place. However, their status will also improve as a result of the communal empowerment, improved public services and raised awareness on their rights.

The aim of the CEP trainings is therefore to raise the marginalized from the bottom of the social ladder to be on the same level with the other community members, respected and acknowledged by their peers. The initial power relations between the leaders and the community members will, however, still remain, maintaining the leaders in a higher power position compared to that of the villagers.

7.1.3. Power Relations between Men and Women

Finally, as for the third level of power relations, it is assumed that women have a lower status and power position compared to that of men in the community. Women have traditionally been considered as the property of the husband, having no say for themselves and their lives. Therefore, as one of the aims of the

CEPs, the trainings create awareness on women's rights, leading to increased participation of women in the decision-making, as well as increased independence as a result of the acquired skills and a steady income:

"And also she's now able to run all the expenses, family expenses, without depending on her husband." (F1)

Although not a direct target group, men are also influenced by the trainings, learning to acknowledge women's role and accept their education and participation in the common affairs. Men have become more truthful and loyal, genuinely willing to contribute to the well-being of the family. The traditional gender roles have been challenged, with men taking part in the activities stereotypically labeled as "women's tasks", while women are participating in income-generating activities (TCRS 2010, 2011, 2012):

"They are sharing, they are doing together." (F3)

"So now they've become truth. [...] She said, in the past at the time when they didn't know to read or to write, that time men get to take advantage. Because even if the man go to the market to selling and come back with the receipt, it was difficult for this woman to know what has been written. But for now as far as she knows how to read and write, once the man is back from the market, they just see the receipt and know what they get. It helped the man to become truth [...]" (F3)

In some target villages, women have also been reported to be contesting for village government positions, becoming property-owners and in general being more active and ready to stand up for themselves, encouraged by the empowerment trainings. In sum, women have been recognized and given equal opportunities in the community:

"And actually we're having women, who are now leaders in their villages, and this has been the result of the trainings that we impart to those people. [...] And also

owning some properties. In the past it was like a taboo, for women not to own properties.” (M8)

“When we conduct women empowerment sessions, we expect that women now, they can take initiative for their development. They can stand for leadership election maybe. Compared to past years maybe, before empowerment process; most of women are feared to talk even in the audience, or they let men themselves to plan for them. But now, most women speak out about their concern.” (M9)

“For example, before income generating activities, the women, they didn’t own anything at their household, but now, they witnessed that ‘now I own my own goat, I own utensils, I own chicken’, so we can see there’s changes, because, they have the power to say ‘I want to sell the chicken, or maybe I want to sell the goat’”. (F13)

As in the case of the marginalized and the leaders, women’s empowerment trainings will lead to an expansion of the overall power in the community, women becoming more independent, recognized and respected by men, having a better control and say on their own lives. Once again, the power position of the men is not threatened by the empowerment of women, as men will be able to maintain their power, becoming united in power with the women.

All in all, based on the changes noticed on all three power levels, it shall be concluded that the CEP trainings aim at more equal distribution of power within the target communities, directly targeting the two extremes of the “power scale”: those at the top and those at the bottom of it. The aim is not to decrease or take away the power of the leaders; on the contrary, the importance of a good, strong leadership is fully acknowledged and supported by TCRS. With empowerment, the entire community, both as a whole and as single individuals, is given more “power”, ideally making the power structures less clearly discernible compared to the initial situation.

7.2. Power in Empowerment

As noted earlier, power in its essence, refers to the *ability to make difference having a circular structure*. In the latter part of the chapter, I shall examine where this ability – power – originates, according to the understanding of TCRS. What makes the individuals to have the ability, to be in power? Moreover, I shall examine the relation of power to empowerment itself, taking into account the suggested circular structure in terms of both of the concepts.

7.2.1. Sources of Power

As suggested by Bech Dyrberg (1997), power is the *ability to do something*. Ability can be experienced in a multitude of ways, ranging from mental to physical capacities, experienced by individuals and collectives. Moreover, power has a *circular structure*, making it difficult to recognize the beginning and the end, or to distinguish between the cause and effect. These same principles can be applied to the sources of emergence of power, all strongly interrelated and inseparable from each other.

According to the data, in the context of TCRS and the target communities, power seems to be rising from at least seven different, yet often interrelated sources. Each of these sources brings about the sense of *ability*. The first and one of the most primitive and fundamental sources of power, *awareness* – being able to, *understanding what, how and why* to do something – often precedes other sources of power, such as self-confidence. With the initial awareness about oneself, one's identity, rights, roles and responsibilities, it is possible to advance to the further steps of power, gradually developing oneself and one's understanding:

“So we empower them, we give them the capacity, give them the power, the ability, to know why they are what they are, how they can get out of it, and their roles and responsibilities in managing their life, their own livelihood.” (M14)

The second source of power, *self-confidence* – being able to, *having the courage* to do something, is closely related to awareness, as the recognition of oneself as a valuable human being. Self-confidence, building up of self-esteem and confidence of oneself and one's actions, will encourage the individual to take action, leading to further improvement.

Cooperation – being able to do something *together*, presents the third source of power emerging from the data. In resonance to Hannah Arendt's (1986) argument, power belongs to a group and emerges from a collectivity. Therefore, unity is power, and a group of individuals is stronger than any individual on their own. Indeed, one of the aims of the CEP trainings is to encourage the community members to get together and build activity groups, so as to enable the faster spread of knowledge and the creation of a strong community spirit.

Also the fourth source of power, *recognition by others* – being able to, being *allowed and encouraged* to do something, supports Arendt's (1986) view. Even with awareness and self-confidence, without the recognition of their value and role as equal members in the collective, the more vulnerable individuals of the community, such as women, will find it harder to achieve their goals and development. When given equal opportunities, each member of the community will have the same chances to build their own development. Moreover, recognition by others is also the essential basis for the higher power positions of the community leaders and religious leaders, as without the support and esteem of the community, they would not obviously hold such a high status.

The fifth source of power emphasizes the capacities of the individuals: *independence* – being able to do something *on their own*. Often, in the context of the present study, independence refers to financial independence, being able to meet the daily needs without depending on the help of others, e.g. in the case of women, without depending on their husband. It can also refer to the mental capacity of the individuals together as the entire community to manage themselves, plan and work for their own development without any external forces guiding or directing them:

“This kind of community, you can say, [is] empowered, because no external forces force them: ‘do this one in order to develop’, no.” (M9)

The sixth source of power, *control* – being able to do something, *having the feeling of control over something*, is very closely related to independence. Indeed, the individual or the community is themselves in control of their own life, not on the mercy of any external factors. Having the feeling of control – control over income, property, future plans, etc. – also adds to the feeling of self-confidence, which, in turn, increases the overall feeling of power.

Finally, the seventh source of power, *education & knowledge* – being able, *knowing how* to do something, is probably the most meaningful and straightforward one to further development. As underlined several times by the interviewees and in the official documents, education is seen as the key to empowerment. By having the skills and the knowledge, by knowing “how to fish”, the individuals will also expand their awareness, build up their self-confidence, and consequently be able to become independent and have control over their life. Education was often mentioned by the interviewees to be the only thing lacking from the poor individuals, whereby the CEP trainings are considered to be of utmost importance for the self-development of the individuals. Education brings knowledge, and as we very well know, knowledge is power:

“Because only thing which really gives people power is education.” (M15)

“They do things for themselves now, even those which you not teach them, they can be able to venture around, because already they are powered, they are trained, they have the skills.” (M8)

As we have seen, the sources of power are interrelated, even inseparable, supporting and strengthening each other. One source often leads to another, but can also be determined by another source. For instance, without awareness, there would hardly be any independence, but independence can also increase

awareness and understanding, as it enables the individual to better see the big picture and all the factors contributing to the well-being. This discovery brings us to the next topic of examination, circularity of power and empowerment.

7.2.2. Circularity of Power and Empowerment

Suggested by Bech Dyrberg (1997), power has a circular structure: it is an effect whose cause is itself a retroactive effect of power. Thus, it can be difficult and irrelevant to try and distinguish between the cause and effect of an ability to make a difference. I shall suggest that this circular thinking can be applied rather straightforwardly to the concept of empowerment too, whereby the whole process of empowerment can be at the same time considered both the source and the outcome of a process of change. In the following, I shall present a few examples of the circular structure of power/empowerment in the context of TCRS and the CEPs.

As for the sources of power presented in the previous sub-chapter, *knowledge* can be considered as an interesting example of circularity. Indeed, knowledge is power and power is knowledge, but which was first? In the case of the CEPs, literacy skills were often seen as a key factor contributing to the empowerment of the individuals. Literacy skills, acquired knowledge, will therefore enable the individuals to make a difference; e.g. in the case of women, to change their husbands' nonchalant attitude and untruthful behavior when it comes to spending the common income in the market (cf. F3 p. 89). Knowledge therefore gave women power and the feeling of empowerment; knowledge was the ability and the cause of making a difference. However, power and empowerment also caused this ability in the first place: without awareness and self-confidence, considered as primitive sources of power, it is unlikely that the women would have had the courage to start the literacy courses, let alone to challenge their husbands.

Another example of the circularity of power is the new ability to question the leaders and the government, and to demand for improvements. This ability is, again, both the cause and the effect of the action of questioning the leaders: the

ability, power, was a trigger for the individuals to stand up for their rights and demand for a change, but this would not have been possible without the initial power, the one rising from awareness and self-confidence, primitive sources of power. Moreover, as the individuals stand up and question the government, their self-confidence, feeling of independence and control will strengthen even further. Therefore, power is a self-feeding phenomenon, constantly strengthened by the actions caused and triggered by it.

“So, I think one of the aim, or one of the post-impact of any CEP should be, not bring the revolution, but to be able to question the authority, in a constructive way, and change even the power dynamics.” (M15)

All in all, we have seen that power and empowerment are very closely related to each other. In the light of the findings in the present study, I shall argue that it is very difficult, if not impossible and also irrelevant to look for the borderline between power and empowerment. Empowerment, the *increased self-awareness and internal feeling of power resulting in the pursuit of enhanced abilities for increasing personal and collective well-being*, is at the same time the cause and effect of the process of the expansion of power, an essential part in the complex net of circularity of power where it is difficult to recognize the beginning and the end.

8. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS



In this case study I wanted to gain a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of empowerment in the field of international development. My initial motivation for the study was to find out whether the empowerment approach could be a solution to the poverty and inequality problem afflicting specifically the Sub-Saharan African countries. Context-dependent and abstract phenomenon, it is necessary to examine empowerment in a specific context, and so a qualitative case study was chosen as a study method. The study was looking into the Community Empowerment Programs of the Tanzanian development NGO Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service, examining the local perceptions of empowerment from three particular aspects: the manifestations of empowerment with respect to the strategic goals and the perceived changes; the intuitive understanding by the agents; and the developments and changes in the power relations caused and triggered by empowerment.

8.1. Changes Resulting from Empowerment

The first research question was to find out about the changes brought about by the CEPs in the community. The data showed that the outcomes are largely in accordance both with the objectives and principles of the CEP strategies of TCRS, and with the earlier studies and theories on empowerment. Indeed, from being a nobody with low or no self-esteem, no human value, no unity among each other, no cooperation or participation, the marginalized and the entire target community are changed to reach the level of high awareness of themselves and their potentials, with increased self-confidence and pride in themselves. As a result of the “enlightenment” and the attitude change brought about by empowerment, the individuals are now independent, motivated, able to prioritize and make plans about their life, taking initiative and actively participating in their own development. On the level of the entire community as a whole, from being largely divided into the “better off”, i.e. mainly men with some property or a leading status, and the “worse off”, i.e. women and the

marginalized, the community has, as a result of empowerment, acquired a strong sense of unity and acceptance, the individuals supporting each other, recognizing the value of the marginalized, and encouraging them to participate in the decision-making. There is a general atmosphere of acceptance, equality and democracy in the community, where the individuals work together for the common good, actively participating to the building up of the common well-being. The community leaders have become more aware of their responsibilities to the villagers, more self-confident and also having more credibility in the eyes of the community members. These changes are summarized in the below Table 2.

Table 2. Overview of the changes triggered by the empowerment intervention in the present case study

BEFORE		AFTER
Individuals Low self-esteem		Awareness Self-confidence Pride
No unity		Collaboration Support for each other
Passiveness		Active participation
Dependent		Independent Being in control Taking initiative
Community Division between groups		Unity Acceptance
Inequality		Equality Democracy

All the aforementioned changes support the objectives listed in the program strategies of TCRS, such as increased awareness, self-reliance, being in control of one's own development, and active participation. Moreover, the changes clearly reflect the characteristics of empowerment mentioned in the earlier studies and treated in the theoretical part of the present study. For instance, as we have seen with Rappaport (1981), empowerment means essentially "enhancing the possibilities to control their lives", and this is exactly what TCRS has been able to achieve with the CEPs. Furthermore, in accordance with Järvinen (2007),

empowerment is a process of capacity-building leading to increased awareness and attitude change. Thus, the theory strongly supports the approach and the outcomes of the CEPs by TCRS.

8.2. Essence of Empowerment

As for the second question, the essence of empowerment for the agents, the *process-like nature* of empowerment emerged above the other characteristics from the data. In the understanding of TCRS, empowerment is a long-term process of change and awareness creation, moving the individuals and the collective from a lower mental level to a higher level of thinking and understanding. Ongoing process, empowerment is a catalyst for further development, building and strengthening the mental capacities of the individuals. Empowerment is an addition, complementing the existing indigenous knowledge present in the village, or, as defined by Sadan (2004), it is a naturally existing potential, often latent before the process of realization of the individuals. Empowerment is an inclusive process involving each and every individual. It can have several levels, layers or phases, but always starts from the individuals and spreads to the larger collectives.

The data showed that an empowered individual can be characterized as being active, taking initiative, having control of their own life, independent from others, having good self-esteem, having the knowledge and the skills and the will to learn more, recognizing their own value and being able to achieve and accomplish something on their own. On the level of the bigger collective, an empowered community is self-motivated and independent, able to define their problems and find solutions for them on their own, actively participating in their own development, having a strong team spirit, sense of unity and collaboration whereby every individual is valued and given an equal chance to take part in the common activities and decision-making. Individuals in an empowered community are stronger together than on their own, there are no divisions or segregation, but different social groups are mixing together and living in harmony. Empowered community is equal, accepting, collaborative, peaceful,

serene and dynamic. In sum, it can be argued that an empowered community is more than the sum of its parts, i.e. the collective form of empowerment is something stronger, broader, more in-depth and more inclusive than the individual level of empowerment. The characteristics of an empowered community – including the empowered individuals but resulting in something more than the sum of its parts – are summarized in the below Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of the characteristics of an empowered community in the present case study – more than the sum of its parts, the empowered individuals together

Empowered community		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initiative-taking - Self-confident - Self-motivated - Independent - Willing to learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having control of their life - Active - Team-spirited - United - Harmonious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equal - Tolerant - Collaborative - Peaceful - Serene - Dynamic

Thus, we notice that the community empowerment as understood by TCRS is largely in accordance with the definitions of the earlier studies, where the empowered community was described essentially as a collective effort to meet collective needs, with a strong sense of community, as well as increased, equal participation and control over their life (cf. Eklund 1999).

8.2.1. Conditions and Obstacles of Empowerment

In the understanding of TCRS, empowerment requires certain conditions for it to occur. Most importantly, it needs *ample time*, an *allowing atmosphere* open to a change, and *change agents* willing to bring about the change. The best strategies to achieve empowerment are essentially *education*: awareness creation, capacity-building, knowledge and skills training; as well as *participation*:

involving each individual from the beginning, encouraging them to take part and consequently assume ownership of the projects. As we can see, these conditions are largely in line with those mentioned by Järvinen (2007), i.e. for instance long-term commitment and an encouraging atmosphere. As for the empowerment obstacles, *lack of time* was clearly the major factor hindering the process. In fact, insufficient time for empowerment trainings can often lead into an even worse situation than the initial one, where the short-term interventions are not able to meet the often very high expectations of the individuals, which generally leads to feelings of disappointment and disorientation. Another major obstacle mentioned was *defiant attitude* to the intervention, either from the community leaders or from the community members themselves. In fact, the new and the unknown – change – can often be considered as a threat, where replacing the old habits and traditions with new ones can seem frightening. Moreover, *dependency syndrome*, insecurity, not having the will and the courage to manage oneself independently, was mentioned as another obstacle only leading to an incomplete or immature empowerment. Finally, many *cultural barriers, old traditions and taboos* can hinder or even prevent the empowerment process from happening, as they strongly affect the attitudes and the mindset of the individuals. Therefore, if the idea of giving women an education is fighting too strongly against the norms and moral codes of the community, it is likely that women's empowerment will not occur. Just as in the case of the empowerment conditions, we notice again accordance with the empowerment inhibitors emerged in the study of Järvinen (2007), such as external dependency, unrealistic plans and cultural factors.

8.2.2. Genuine and Instrumental Empowerment

One of my aims in the examination of the essence of empowerment was also to better define and distinguish between its instrumental and genuine forms. In the data, I was able to find several examples of what can be defined as rather genuine empowerment. In fact, most of the time, the approach practiced by TCRS does, indeed, lead to genuine, sustainable and self-feeding empowerment, where the individuals, the marginalized in particular, and the bigger collective experience a drastic change of mindset affecting and permanently changing almost their entire way of thinking, leading to attitude changes, expanded mental

capacities, self-esteem and independence. However, in the case of the leadership empowerment, it is questionable whether it can be considered truly genuine empowerment, or whether it is more instrumental, something rather quantifiably measurable and pre-determined by external requirements coming from the donors. Indeed, the leadership empowerment was often described in the data with the same specific terms so often found in the strategies of the international development actors, such as acknowledging the importance of good governance, accountability, improved record-keeping, regular meetings and evaluations. To find out whether the leaders have really experienced empowerment in the communities, it is necessary to look deep into the minds of the leaders themselves, instead of merely evaluating their newly acquired behaviors and learned actions.

8.3. Changes in the Power Relations as a Result of Empowerment

In my third question, I wanted to identify the developments of the inner power relations of the community after the empowerment intervention. Firstly, I discovered that the power relations exist on three levels: between the community leaders and the community members, between the marginalized and the rest of the community, and between men and women. I noticed a similar trend of changes on all three levels. Indeed, the empowerment interventions essentially result in an expansion and a more equal distribution of power among the individuals, whereby the worse off are being brought to the same level with the better off. The initial power relations between the leaders and the rest of the community members remain, the leaders still holding a higher status compared to that of the villagers; however, the villagers are more encouraged to stand up and demand for their rights. Perhaps the most significant development occurs in terms of the power relations between men and women, whereby women become empowered directly as a result of the CEP trainings, realizing their potentials, becoming more confident and independent, whereas men experience what could be defined as “indirect” or spillover empowerment. Indeed, the empowerment and enlightenment of women spreads and spills over to men, who now become more truthful and loyal to the family, recognizing the role of women and their

enormous contribution to the well-being of the entire family, accepting and encouraging the participation of women in decision-making and other activities. Therefore, the empowerment interventions can clearly be said to lead into more equal distribution of power among the individuals in the target communities.

8.3.1. Sources of Power

Another finding related to power were the sources of power. I discovered at least seven sources for the feeling of power, all of which, however, very closely interrelated. Power seems to be emerging from *awareness*, the understanding; *self-confidence*, the courage; *cooperation*, the strength of the unity, which reminds us of the collective power definition by Arendt (1986); *recognition by others*, the equal chances; *independence*, the autonomy and liberty of action; *control*, the mastery of one's own destiny, as well as *education and knowledge*, the ability of reasoning. We notice a circular relation between the sources of power, one source affecting and strengthening the other (see Figure 1. page 103), which also leads us to confirm Bech Dyrberg's (1997) view on the circularity of power that can also be applied to empowerment. Indeed, empowerment and power being so closely related to each other, it is irrelevant to draw categorical boundaries between them. It is more fruitful to consider power as an essential part of empowerment – and *vice versa*. Empowerment is, in fact, at the same time the cause and the retroactive effect of the expansion of power.

Figure 1. Perceived sources of power in the present case study



8.4. Empowerment as a Development Approach

In conclusion, to attempt to answer the initial question and the objective of my study, whether or not empowerment could be considered as the way out of poverty, the key to reduce the striking inequalities between the poor Sub-Saharan African countries and the wealthier countries, I am inclined to recognize the success of the approach; however, on the condition that it is *genuine*, something emerging from within the individuals and collectives as a result of *increased self-awareness and internal feeling of power resulting in the pursuit of enhanced abilities for increasing personal and collective well-being*, which leads to a change in mindset in the individual with long-term and sustainable outcomes. If the empowerment is more *instrumental*, something pushed from the outside with a pre-set timeframe, specific criteria and goals determined by the external development agents, it will not bring sustainable results. On the contrary, it will often lead to an even more detrimental situation of distress, disappointment and disorientation, building up high, unrealistic expectations of the promised,

utopistic-like changes that it is often not able to deliver. Only when genuine, will empowerment be successful and has the chance to, slowly but steadily, bring the poorer countries to prosperity.

8.5. Concluding Remarks and Further Research

Instead of sticking to one definition of the concepts of empowerment and power, I chose to resort to a selection of definitions from different theorists in my case study. This provided me with flexibility for the analysis, not having to stick to one strictly limited concept but allowing me to freely apply and adjust the various definitions according to the specific context. On the other hand, not having one clear definition for either of the concepts hindered the analysis by turning it at times rather vague and abstract, therefore also negatively affecting its external validity and reliability. However, as emphasized earlier, the study of empowerment is, in fact, largely context-dependent and therefore it is not even relevant to directly transfer the results of the study to other contexts. Nonetheless, being largely in accordance with the findings of the earlier studies and research, the results of the present study bring a contribution to the overall theory of empowerment, adding to the general understanding of the concept in the field of development.

Learned from the present research, both in terms of empowerment and other development programs in general, is the importance of contextualization of the used concepts: before implementing a development program in the field, it is important to be well familiar with the local context, its culture and its dynamics. Both the target community and the development agent should have common understanding on the meaning of the used concepts, leaving some space and flexibility to adjustments according to the changing context. Otherwise the risk of confusion, ambiguity and misunderstandings, leading to e.g. instrumental empowerment and overuse of development buzzwords empty of meaning, is very high. As for the empowerment programs more specifically, as also emphasized by the representatives of TCRS, it is essential for the longevity of the process of empowerment to focus the attention on the *long-term results*, and not

to look into some quantitative, material and quick-fix results. To discover the nature of genuine empowerment, it is necessary to look deeper than on the surface, to go all the way into the changes in attitudes, norms and values.

In the future research, efforts are needed to find out more about the nature of the empowerment of the leaders – in Tanzania and in other contexts – whether or not it is genuine, or rather instrumental. Indeed, due to the limited amount of time spent in the context of the study, I was not able to look more into the claimed empowerment of the local leaders. Moreover, it would be beneficial for the approach of empowerment in general to further and look more closely into the question of its intrinsic nature in different contexts to be better able to distinguish between genuine and instrumental empowerment.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Interview themes (TCRS workers; **questions in bold** = higher priority)

- General Questions
 1. For how long have you been working for TCRS?
 2. What does your work consist of?
 3. How is your usual day at work like?

- Community Empowerment Program

Introduction: *I have learned from the country strategy that with the CEPs you aim at empowering “vulnerable, marginalized and displaced communities to achieve economic self-reliance, participate in national governance processes and enjoy fundamental human rights”; increased participation and awareness creation etc. Now I would like you to explain to me in your own words your perceptions of the CEP.*

4. In your own words, what is the purpose of the CEPs?

- What kind of individuals take part in the CEP trainings?
- In your own words, what do the participants learn at the CEP training?

5. What kind of change have you witnessed in the participants after they have taken part in the CEP training?

6. In your understanding, how have the participants experienced the CEP training?

- Community & Participation
 - 7. In the CEP documents, you talk about *target communities* that the programs are conducted with. In your own words, what do you mean by *community*?**

- Could you give me an example of a target community that you have been working with?
- What was the size of the population?
- Were there different groups within the community? What was/were their main livelihood(s)?

8. In your understanding, who should participate in the CEP training?

- In which ways do the individuals within the community participate in the CEP? Are some more active than others? Do some have more power than others?

9. Have you witnessed a change of any kind in the community after the CEP training? Could you give me an example?

- What will change in the community after the CEP?
- How is the position of the most vulnerable members of the community like after the CEP?

- Process of Empowerment

Introduction: *I have read in the documents about the outcomes of the CEPs; improved leadership skills among village leaders, increased participation of the community members to the meetings, improved livelihoods and economic sustainability, etc. Now I would like to ask **your personal perception** of the concept of **empowerment** in terms of the community and the individuals.*

10. In your own words, could you give me an example of what empowerment means to you?

11. Could you give me an example of where empowerment has occurred? A success story?

- When and how did it start, how did it happen?
- Why was it successful? What were the conditions for it to occur?

12. Could you give me an example of a situation where empowerment did not occur, despite your support?

- When and how did it start, how did it happen?
- What could have been done otherwise?

13. In your own words, how would you describe the ideal state of an empowered community?

- Empowerment Agent / Role of TCRS

14. What are the best strategies to achieve the ideal state of an empowered community?

15. How are these strategies planned?

- How does the community participate in planning the strategies?

16. What happens to the community when the CEP training is over?

- How to ensure the sustainability of empowerment?
- What is the role of TCRS in the community when the CEPs have ended?

Appendix II

Interview themes (Community members)

A) General questions

1. What do you do for living?
2. How is your usual day like?

B) TCRS

3. What do you know about TCRS?
4. In your own words, what does TCRS do for you and your community?

C) CEP & Community

5. Have you taken part in the training? Would you like to take part?
6. What have you learned during the trainings? How have you experienced the training?
7. What has been the most useful for you?
8. What has been the most useful for your community?

D) Participation & Community

9. In the community, who takes part in the training?
10. Who decides upon the participants within the community?
11. In which ways do different community members participate in the training?