

**Empowerment as Kaleidoscope: A Comprehensive
Empowerment Approach for Young Women squatters in
Cairo**

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Chapter 1: Overview & Introduction of the Research Paper

1.1: Introduction

Empowerment of oppressed groups is an issue emanating from a normative discourse that has spanned many eras. It has taken on different meanings, and has been implemented in various ways. Nevertheless, it springs from, a firm conviction in the human rights of every individual to have the capacity to unleash their potential to achieve. This study attempts to explore the question of empowerment of poor women living in squatter settlements within the context of Cairo, Egypt. Cairo nowadays has an estimated population of 18 million. In 1987, it was estimated that out of a total of 8 Million inhabitants in Cairo, one million of them lived as squatters in an ancient cemetery called:” The City of the Dead”, another half-million occupied roof-tops, and millions of others live in illegal squatter settlements or unauthorized housing divisions (Khalifa and Mohieddin, 1988, in Aldrich and Sandhu, 1995: 17).

With hardships and a strong emphasis on urban-bias during the industrialization period of Egypt (1950- 1970’s), agriculture was neglected and rural migrants came to Cairo, searching for better economic opportunities. Many of them could not find shelter and settled on land owned by the government, and some even settled in cemeteries. One such group of migrants, the *Zabbaleen*¹ settled on such land and were evicted several times, until they finally settled in the part of Cairo known as Mokattam.

Egypt is influenced by many conservative cultural traditions that spring from its rich cultural, male- dominated history. In rural areas and in middle and poorer classes in urban centers, notions relating to women’s role in life and marriage remain deeply rooted in tradition and patriarchy. In Upper Egypt (rural South), women’s economic independence is not culturally encouraged. Instead women are expected to concentrate solely on their “Reproductive work”. However, some could work outside the home out of necessity, but their labor and income is controlled by the male household head. Thus, this prevalent gender ideology subjects young women to many constraints and control mechanisms on their labor, income and reproductive rights.

¹ *Zabbaleen*: Is an Arabic term, in the plural form, to mean Garbage Collectors, singular, *Zabbal*.

This is especially true for poor girls and women in urban squatter areas and rural contexts.

1.2. Mokattam / Zabbaleen: Urban Squatter Settlement

The particular squatter settlement about which this study is concerned, is the Mokattam / *Zabbaleen* garbage collector's community, which is the largest garbage collector's settlement out of seven found in Cairo alone. Mokattam has 17,000 inhabitants and is continuously expanding. The inhabitants are rural migrants from Upper-Egypt, who came to Cairo in search of a better life and ended living in the outskirts of Cairo working in the collection of solid waste. Though under constant threat of eviction by the government, the *Zabbaleen* are rendering a vital and crucial service to the city of Cairo, by collecting most of the city's refuse. However, this is not appreciated by the authorities, because of the "backward" image donkey carts give to the streets of a "modernizing" state.

Ninety percent of the inhabitants of the *Zabbaleen* are Christians, which is a minority in Egypt. There were two waves of migration to the outskirts of Cairo, one a 100 years ago and the other 50 years ago. The "*Wahiya*"² who migrated a 100 years ago dictate the routes for garbage collection and assign the poorer *Zabbaleen*, to these routes. The *Wahiya* are the managers of this traditional waste collection system. The *Zabbaleen* who migrated much later to the city came from Upper-Egypt. As in their villages of origin, they were considered the poorest of the poor and even now in the city, they fall in the lowest 10% bracket of income. They initially began raising pigs on the fodder they bought from the *Wahiya*. Once they began collecting garbage on donkey carts, the sale of the material they sorted and of the pigs they raised, became their source of income (Assaad And Garas, 93/ 94: 2-3).

1.3 Women's conditions in the settlement:

One observes a clear-cut sexual division of labor. Men are mainly responsible for the garbage collection and disposal process, with the assistance of their sons, brothers, or young daughters. Once collected, the garbage is deposited in the courtyard near their

² *Wahiya*: is the plural of *Wahi*: It is in Arabic, and depicts someone coming from the Oasis, or western desert of Egypt. As they are Muslims, they collected garbage (when they first came), but did

homes, where sorting into organic and inorganic is undertaken by the women manually. Girls are allowed to accompany their fathers until the age of 12. Following that, girls are secluded to the confines of their household, where they help their sisters and mother to sort the garbage. It is evident that these migrants brought with them their traditional patriarchal ideology regarding women. The prevalent gender ideology, especially in rural areas, dictates that girls are married at a young age (between 12-18 yrs old) and that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has been performed on them, to ensure their marriageability³ .

1.4. Assisting the women of the *Zabbaleen* settlement: Association for the Protection of the Environment (APE):

APE, the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in question, was created in 1984. Its initial focus was on community development, mainly income generation through transforming organic waste into soil conditioner (fertilizer) in a compost plant⁴. The aims of the NGO later shifted in consideration of the situation of women in this community. APE decided to target the most vulnerable groups in the community, their women. The NGO set up income- generation opportunities, which included rug weaving, recycled paper-making and patchwork. In addition, literacy, furthering education, health-care awareness classes and many other opportunities were offered. These interventions attempt to deal with the various dimensions of empowerment.

1.5 Research Objectives:

Theoretical Objective:

The theoretical objective of this study is to analytically link theories and conceptual debates of urban squatter theory, such as stigmatization, exclusion and vulnerability with feminist theories of empowerment and agency, in the light of the young women working under enabling conditions of APE.

Practical Objective:

Through an assessment of the extent to which APE, a community development association, has contributed to the empowerment of the young women, I hope to

not raise pigs. Prior to the *Zabbaleen*, the non-recyclable garbage was used as fuel for heating Turkish baths and cooking (Assaad And Garas 93/94: 2).

³ Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was considered to be 97% prevalent amongst married women in Egypt. It is mainly practiced in the middle and poorer classes in rural and some urban contexts. Some link it to Islam, but the rural Copts of Egypt also practice it, including this community of garbage collectors, who preserve it as an assertion of the community' s identity. It is performed at a very young age.

⁴ The organic waste includes garbage and pig manure.

contribute to policy considerations, in respect to the situation of marginalized young women in urban squatters.

1.6. Research Questions:

Main Question:

- What are the opportunities, dynamics and processes for empowerment and agency of young women living in this garbage collector's squatter settlement community under enabling conditions of the NGO / APE?

Sub-questions:

- 1- What were the living conditions of these young women, prior to their involvement in the NGO; including the different forms of control over their mobility, fertility, sexuality and labor? What resources did they have? Did they have agency, and on what? (Chapter 3)
- 2- What were the Opportunities provided and interventions used by APE to face these vulnerabilities and to provide conducive elements for empowerment? (Chapter 4)
- 3- What are the outcomes of the comprehensive approach followed by APE, on the various dimensions of empowerment? How do the different dimensions of empowerment (economic, educational, social and cultural) interact? In the process of dynamic interaction, what new resources have the women gained access to and/ or control over? How have those resources influenced women's agency? What achievements have women accomplished, using these resources? (Chapter 5).
- 4- Have the dynamic interactions between different dimensions, which are affecting various gender and squatter related conditions, led to a personal transformation only, or has that transformation also transcended to the community? (Chapter 5).

1.7. Research Methods and Data Sources:

Data Collection⁵:

The nature of the research entailed a field visit of approximately a month to Cairo.

⁵ This data collection was accompanied with literature survey on the empowerment and urban squatter theories, and some books on Mokattam.

(1)- I first made *exploratory visits*, to re-establish contact with the young women, to familiarize myself with recent developments.

(2)- A survey using a *questionnaire*, with a purposive sample of fifty young women and adolescents working in the NGO. Data collected was sought on personal characteristics: Age, marital status, situation prior to the involvement at APE, period of involvement with APE, type of activity within it, and level of leadership or level of responsibility given to the women, salary and so on. The questions were also assessing decision-making powers within the household, in order to examine levels and dimensions of empowerment.

(3) There are two objectives for the questionnaire, one identify the qualitative and some of the quantitative indicators of empowerment; and two, select the ten young women for *in depth-interviews*. In the ten in-depth interviews, I probed into the lives of the young women attempting to establish their life stories, level of empowerment, their own definition of empowerment, and their views on the impact of empowerment on their lives and that of their families.

(5) **Data analysis:** The research used SPSS for statistical descriptive analysis accompanied by transcriptions of the interviews.

1.8 Justification:

The choice of this research effort was both a personal and academic pursuit. Having volunteered in this NGO myself, I wanted to shed some light on a hopefully successful experience in women's empowerment and to explore its replicability. The academic pursuit was to use feminist theories to analyze this experiment in women's empowerment. Some research has been done to document the *Zabbaleen* community and even the impact of APE on women. However, they mainly focused on the economic empowerment, and not on its connection with social, cultural and educational empowerment. Those who did deal with this connection, dealt with it from the perspective of practitioners and advocates of development and not from the academic perspective. This research will use the multi-angled, holistic approach to the young women's empowerment in theory, linking it to practice, based on primary data collected in the Mokattam settlement, on empowerment as defined by the young women at APE.

1.9 Outline of Chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction & Overview chapter.

Chapter 2: Explores two clusters of empowerment theories, which survey economic, educational, social and cultural empowerment dimensions. The last section of that chapter operationalizes some of the aspects from theory that fit within the context of this study's data analysis.

Chapter 3: Describes the situation for the entire *Zabbaleen* community, while explaining it in terms of some aspects of urban squatters' literature. Then the chapter focuses on women's particular conditions of disempowerment, within the community.

Chapter 4: Explains the creation and evolution of APE. It further explores what opportunities it has offered to the young women of that community.

Chapter 5: Interweaves the analytical framework with the qualitative data collected through the questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

Chapter 6: Concludes with a final note on the dynamics between the various dimensions of empowerment, which assists in further reflection on the essence of the concept and its implications.

Chapter 2: Women's Empowerment: A theoretical/ Analytical perspective for female urban squatters:

The concept of empowerment, originated from the Alternative Development⁶ school of thought and was first adopted by feminists⁷ in the 1970's to encompass women's empowerment. Overtime, this concept has changed its focus.

2.1 General definition of Empowerment and a genealogy of this concept as portrayed in the literature:

In the 1970's, Peggy Antrobus defined empowerment as:

“a process that enables a powerless woman to develop autonomy, self-control and confidence and with a group of women and men, a sense of collective influence over oppressive social conditions[...] (women) understand gender oppression and organize to change ways in which different institutions sanction and facilitate their treatment as second class citizens, the collective empowerment of women will occur.” (Bisnath & Elson, 2000:2).

This transformatory definition of empowerment, *“was used to frame the struggle for social justice and women's equality [that required] a transformation of economic, social and political structures at national and international levels”* (Bisnath & Elson, 2000: 1).

In the 1980's, feminists focusing on the individual and collective potentials of the concept, identified some of the steps towards increasing women's capacities, self-reliance and internal strength. Women's “right to determine choices in life and to influence the direction of change, through the ability to gain control over crucial material and non-material resources”. (Bisnath & Elson, 2000: 3). Their argument was not as much to take away power from men and have power over them, but to increase women's capacities to have “power to” make their own life choices and to reduce the “power over” them by men.

In the 1990's, there was an increased focus on the individual and economic empowerment of women through micro-finance and income generating activities. However, some feminists continue to pursue the original transformative definition of empowerment. They argue that there is a form of conspiracy, or "erasure/ partial silencing" of this original intent of women's empowerment in the development discourse. Kabeer categorically defines Empowerment as:” the expansion in people's

⁶ Friedman (1992); Wils (2001).

⁷ Moser (1989);. See also: Jo Rowlands (1997); Townsend et al (1999).

ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.” (Kabeer 2001: 19).

2.2 Empowerment Approaches: Two Clusters:

Empowerment has various dimensions: These include the: economic, social, cultural, educational, legal, political and personal. There are two clusters of approaches: the “Ripple” approach, which has a single focus or entry point, with "spin-off" effects on other dimensions of empowerment⁸. The second is the "comprehensive" approach, which combines multiple empowerment interventions and dimensions being tackled simultaneously, leading to a complex web of results and inter-linkages between the dimensions.

2.3 “Ripple” Approaches:

2.3: A) Economic Empowerment:

Marlyin Carr and colleagues (1996), discuss economic empowerment as the core vehicle in promoting women’s empowerment. They argue that many organizations promote “women’s empowerment in their economic lives as the best base for achieving over all empowerment” (Carr et al: 1996, 5). Key to the empowerment and alleviation of poverty for women is the understanding of the sources of their disempowerment. They discovered the complexity of women’s lives and from this background they devised complex strategies to deal with the question of empowerment. The main instrument of empowerment used by BRAC and SEWA⁹ was economic, and it was tackled through specific economic strategies, which are: financial interventions, enterprise development, marketing strategies, bargaining for better wages and working conditions and socio-political strategies. However, there is also a need to focus on some of the socio-political constraints, which surround economic empowerment. Carr et al mentions, it is sometimes necessary to adopt one or more of the socio-political strategies such as those dealing with power relations within the family and the community. However, these latter strategies are not seen as a priority by many institutions (Carr et al: 1996, 201-202). This seems to fit in the “Ripple Approach” which begins with an economic entry, and hopes that it will affect all other forms of empowerment in a processual manner.

⁸ This type of approach, can be economic, political or educational

According to Carr et al, “Economic Empowerment” as “ economic change/ material gain plus increased bargaining power and / or structural change, which enables women to secure economic gains on an on-going and sustained basis” (ibid: 203). They see women’s empowerment as a mutually reinforcing process, such that the effects of economic empowerment through the NGO’s and women’s organization have impacts on many levels namely, the household, community, markets and governments and in all spheres of life: social, economic and political. One of the successes of these case studies, is that they are multi-layered interventions in support of women’s empowerment, but they recognize, promote and build upon the centrality and power of economic resources, which could then have an effect on the over all empowerment process (Carr et al: 1996, 210). Often, organizing women is geared towards satisfying survival concerns, rather than restructuring social order (218). I tend to agree with Carr on the importance of economic interventions, as vital to “grab” women’s attention, however, I do not agree with the idea that it is the only entry point. A variety of interventions occurring at the same time maybe more effective.

In the micro-finance literature, Hashemi and Riley (1996 :635), promote the "Minimalist Approach" to empowerment. The main focus is provision of credit and not necessarily on other supplementary support services. From their study of Grameen Bank and BRAC, they concluded that this model was successful in empowering women economically, because of strong centralized focus on credit.

However, the “minimalist approach” has been criticized in its capacity to lead to empowerment and that it may in some situations worsen the condition of women¹⁰. Hashemi & Riley (1996:636), insist on the capacity of credit programs to empower women by strengthening their economic roles, which in turn assists them to contribute more to their family’s support. This view is not uncommon, in fact it is the view advocated by the World Bank in their literature, using Grameen bank and BRAC as best practices. Credit provisions is argued to lead to economic empowerment, and also have a “trickle down” effect on other areas of women’s lives.

⁹ Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee and Self-Employed Women’s Association in India.

¹⁰ These critics advocate more holistic approaches, which deal with non-formal education, consciousness raising and political mobilization to change oppressive structures. Credit-focused approaches, they argue cannot handle all of these interventions (Hashemi & Riley: 1996: 636).

Hunt and Kasynathan (2001: 44-45), evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of micro credit programs in effective anti-poverty interventions and especially in leading to women's empowerment or transforming gender relations. They found that for many women, micro-finance has had a marginal effect on the array of components included in women's empowerment. This reflects the complexity of impacts micro-finance has on women. In some cases, husbands may respect the women more, because they see the loans as an additional source of income for the family. In other cases, husbands take the money for their own uses. In a third example, the women give part of the loan to male members and keep the rest for their own businesses.

Concern is voiced by Farida Akhter from UBINIG Bangladesh. She criticizes micro-credit programs, because in some instances it increased violence against women, within the household and outside of it. This is further exemplified in the fact that more than 50% of borrowers from BRAC and Grameen are female, who are considered to be "more traceable". Furthermore, it leads to the use of more humiliating and abusive language on women, by credit loan officers (Akhter 2000: 6).

In contrast, Hunt and Kasynathan (2001:48) assert the increased self-respect and self-worth earned by women from access to credit, since they are able to contribute to household finances. This was accompanied with increased awareness of their rights, and strength in finding oneself in a supportive group of women. With access to credit, a little training and some group support, some women are able to negotiate significant increases in power and decision-making within their households'.

2.3: B) Women's Political Empowerment: According to Bystydzienski (1992:3), the aim of political empowerment, as with other forms of empowerment, is not necessarily to gain "power over" and become the oppressor, rather it is for women to gain "power to" govern themselves. This component is closely associated with others like economic and educational empowerment. A core element of political empowerment is the need for women to "recognize the injustice of power differences" and try to challenge them. In a small group of consciousness-raising in Bystydzienski's study, some women began to discuss their daily life and possibilities of changing it. This resulted in the growth of the group in both numbers and objectives as well as the incorporation of the political demands of such groups in the

Mexican women's movement. (Bystydzienski 1992: 98).

Political empowerment is achieved in several ways: increase the number of in political decision-making positions, and in grassroots organizations, to exert pressure on development and governmental institutions to take women's demands seriously. According to Fredland in Bystydzienski (1992: 194), "when women are involved in the decision-making and implementing stages of development , communities thrive, and roles and behavior patterns are redefined".

This approach fits within the "Ripple" category, which argues that once political empowerment is achieved, women can then demand for their rights in all other aspects of their lives and through this achieve enhanced economic opportunities, social and legal empowerment.

2.4 The " Comprehensive Approach":

2.4: A) Linda Mayoux's additive approach to Women's Empowerment:

Mayoux (1998) argues on the importance of having a comprehensive approach to empowerment:

" The evidence indicates that some women in some contexts, even very poor women, micro-finance programs can indeed contribute to empowerment. However, for many women, impact on both economic and social empowerment appears to be marginal, and some women maybe disempowered. [...] Although existing data is inadequate, it does indicate the need to explicitly incorporate strategies for empowerment, rather than just increasing women's access to microfinance". (Mayoux 1999: 958 cited in Hunt & Kasynathan, 2001: 43).

Linda Mayoux, adopts a feminist empowerment paradigm as exemplified in her matrix of the four forms of power: "Power from Within", "Power to", "Power over" and "Power with" (Mayoux, 1998:238).

First, "Power from within": refers to the increased will for change and aspiring to challenge patriarchal cultures through self-confidence, and enhancement of decision-making abilities, including controlling one's own fertility. This encompasses, cultural and political as well as economic forms of empowerment (equal right to resources).

Second, "Power to": refers to the increased access to income, markets and child-care (the reduction of unpaid domestic work) and enhanced mobility. Also, increased

access to literacy, education, better health and nutrition, as well as, access to reproductive health. It also includes awareness of the cultural and political events outside the home.

Third, “Power over” : entails the minimization of obstacles faced at the household and community level as well as access to different forms of control, i.e.: control over productive assets or an increased say in household consumption patterns and in household decision making, especially in matters affecting women and their ability to defend themselves against violence. This may also impact upon one’s ability to perceive their rights.

Fourth, “Power with”: refers to increased solidarity with other women for change at different levels: the household, community and at macro-levels. This includes the creation of networks for support in times of crisis, contributing to actions and movements where women are defended and protected from abuse and where gender subordination is challenged at the household and community level. Economically, it entails joint action to challenge discrimination against women’s access to resources and markets.

The ultimate result of empowerment to Mayoux is the increased “ solidarity” amongst women to change and challenge underlying oppressive structures at all levels and to cooperate in times of crises (Mayoux, 1998: 238).

2.4: B) Naila Kabeer’s Processual Empowerment Framework:

Kabeer’s discussion of the three inter-related dimensions - resources, agency and achievements- fits well with Mayoux's matrix of the four forms of power.

For instance Kabeer discusses empowerment in the context of increased material resources, such as land, finance, capital and social resources (networks and relationships). This relates to Mayoux’s “power to” accessing the resource and “power over”, controlling it. These ideas imply a dynamic interaction between resources, the agency of women and the achievements they accomplish.

In addition, Kabeer sees three different levels of empowerment. The first, is a deeper level, which changes the structural relations within a society (class, caste, gender).

The second is the intermediate level, denoting a change in institutional rules. Finally,

the third is a change in the individual's resources, agency and achievements (Kabeer 2001: 27). These three levels of empowerment reflect important linkages between "power to" and "power over", because it is possible for one to gain access to a resource, but not have control over it. Thus, as Kabeer argues, "access" indicators are not sufficient, but should be supplemented by indicators of "control" over resources and its effect on decision-making abilities (including choice in selection of spouse), in order to become an indicative measure of empowerment (Kabeer, 2001: 30). Also, if an individual has control over assets, this could contribute to the "power to" decide on issues such as the consumption patterns of the household. Kabeer continues to stress the difference between "actual" and "potential" choice. A woman may have potential choice in a matter, but no actual choice. (Kabeer, 2001: 28).

Kabeer then proceeds to measure 'agency' of women, through their increased mobility in the public domain in regions where women are usually isolated and secluded. Her definition is confined to "decision-making agency". Citing Kishor (1997) in the case of Egypt, the typical decision-making indicators with regards to household budget are: food, cooking, visits, children's education, children's health and use of family planning methods (Kabeer: 2001, 33). Kabeer argues that some decisions are 'control points', within the decision-making process itself, especially where control is permitted depending on the significance of the outcome, such as contraceptive use (34).

Kabeer contends that though statistical data may provide a glimpse of decision-making processes, but it cannot portray "*the subtle negotiations that go on between women and men in their private lives*" (Kabeer 2001: 34). Thus, excessive reliance on statistical data can underestimate the informal decision-making channels in which women exercise their agency. Citing research in South Asia, which is applicable to the *Zabbaleen*, Kabeer states that

" [...] the renegotiation of power relations, particularly within the family, is often precisely about changes in informal decision-making, with women opting for private forms of empowerment, which retain intact the public image, and honor, of the traditional decision-maker, but which nevertheless increases their 'backstage' influence in decision-making processes " (Kabeer 2001: 35).

The third dimension of empowerment, is measuring achievement. Kabeer, cites the

work of Kishor (1997), who developed three composite categories of indicators of achieving empowerment, namely: 1) Direct evidence of empowerment, 2) sources of empowerment, 3) Setting indicators. I shall enumerate some of them in this section. In the first category, she explored the “devaluation of women” measured through reports of domestic violence and dowry paid at marriage. Followed by factors for women’s emancipation, such as freedom of movement and an increase in daughter’s education. Within this same category, she assesses sharing of roles and decision-making, as well as financial autonomy of the woman being able to control her earnings (Kishor 1997; quoted in Kabeer 2001: 37). In the second category, she explored sources of empowerment such as length of and access to employment before and after marriage. Finally, in the third category, Kishor examined the flexibility of the family structure in accepting empowerment, selection of spouse. Age and educational differences of married couples were also studied (Kishor 1997; quoted in Kabeer 2001: 37).

2.5 Measuring Empowerment: Operational analytical framework

For this study, the comprehensive approach, as represented by Mayoux and Kabeer, is the most helpful framework for the analysis of young *Zabbaleen* women’s empowerment through APE. Mayoux’s matrix interacts well with Kabeer's framework and many of Kabeer's field examples fit the examples in Mokattam. Kabeer provides helpful inter-linkages, between indicators, for measuring empowerment. Her framework encompasses women's empowerment not only at an individual level and within the household but also within the community. In addition, I also use Hashemi and Riley’s economic and social indicators.

For the four forms of power used by Mayoux: Power to, over, from within and with, I refer the reader to the comprehensive section. These forms of power, interact well with Kabeer three concepts- Resource (is linked to “power to” and “power over”) Agency, and Achievements, deal with all four forms of power.

Kabeer’s definition of resources, includes “ material, social and human”. With regards to the material, this study only refers to finance as an indication of economic empowerment, since land and capital do not necessarily apply in the case of the *Zabbaleen*. For social resources, defined by Kabeer, as claims and expectations that exist in relationships (family), and which assist individuals in improving one’s life to

a higher level than would be possible alone. The study also takes on board her idea on skills gained by an individual such as knowledge, creativity and imagination, as resources. All these resources serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice. Kabeer contends that in disempowering situations, heads of households define priorities in the allocation and use of resources, while in empowering ones a more balanced system, enables women to contribute to decisions, including those which impact directly on their lives and livelihood (Kabeer, 2001: 20).

Agency, is a central aspect of empowerment, encompassing the four forms of power of Mayoux. It is defined as the “ability to define one’s goals and act upon them”. Agency deals with individual decision-making powers / “power from within”, as bargaining, negotiation, resistance and other more cognitive processes of reflection and analysis. Agency encompasses individual and collective action and alludes to “power to” make one’s life choices and to pursue one’s goals, even in the face of opposition (Kabeer, 2001: 21).

Finally, achievements, can be both positive and negative. Where people are unable to achieve because of inherent inequalities in the distribution of capabilities and resources, there is disempowerment. To bring about empowerment, it is necessary to look at such hindrances and inequalities especially those that inhibit people in making choices and challenging these constraints, to allow the expansion of choice (Kabeer, 2001: 22).

Kabeer sees empowerment as a “process of social change”, which begins with individual empowerment indicators, but in the interaction between structure and agency, can then transcend that level to a more transformatory one (28). That is what I will be trying to assessing in my own analysis.

The measurement indicators of Hashemi and Riley’s, used in this study are presented in the box below: Text Box N. 1: **The Eight Indicators of Empowerment**

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1- <i>Increased mobility for women</i>: including whether she can go out of the house more often, where she goes and if she goes alone or not.2- <i>Economic security</i>: Depending on what a woman owns as productive assets.3- <i>A woman’s ability to make small purchases</i>, such as oil, spices, kerosene for cooking, soap, hair oil, ice cream or sweets for kids. |
|--|

4- *A woman's ability to make larger purchases* to buy children's clothing, her and food for the household. The more a woman buys these items on her own, partly with her own earnings the more she is perceived as empowered.

5- *About the Involvement in Major decisions*, whether individually or in jointly with her husband.

6- is "*Relative freedom from domination by family*", meaning that she was not forced to give any of her income against her will, or stopped from working outside of the home. 7 & 8-: Discuss *Political participation and Legal awareness* (Hashemi & Riley 1996: 638).

With regards to educational empowerment, I analyze it with the perspective that literacy, health education, legal, reproductive rights and good training, can lead to a form of self liberation and critical awareness. This could have the potential of increasing a woman's bargaining power within the family, as well as freeing her from traditional practices dictated to her by patriarchal views. This component is crucial for women's empowerment since it would have "Ripple" effects on other components of empowerment¹¹.

The above-mentioned concepts and theories are used in the analyzing of the field data in chapter 5. However, we have also included the idea of cultural empowerment, defined in this study as, becoming more aware of the cultural, patriarchal traditions and their oppressive and harmful impacts, while finding the power to / over and within or even with to challenge such traditions. As demonstrated by data, empowerment in this study is seen as transformatory only if it is comprehensive and holistic with a processual nature, in accordance with the feminist definition of the 1970's.

¹¹ For further in depth analysis of the outcomes of a liberating education, refer to Paulo Freire: 1970.

3. Disempowerment Conditions of the Zabbaleen squatters and especially for women

The *Zabbaleen*, a group of rural immigrants who settled on the Mokattam hills in the outskirts of Cairo and made garbage collection, disposal and recycling their main source of livelihood. This community lives in deplorable conditions and is highly vulnerable to social exclusion, marginalization and stigmatization. In addition, women face particular vulnerabilities due to traditional and cultural dictates.

3.1. Background on the Mokattam *Zabbaleen*¹² Settlement:

Since their initial migration from Upper-Egypt, the rural South in the 1950's, the *Zabbaleen* have been evicted several times. Their last eviction was from Imbaba and they moved to Mokattam in the 1970s. In order to resume their economic activities after the move and without tenure security, they hastily built tin shacks to live in. A World Bank Upgrading program in the 1980s, helped them gain security and they put up concrete houses and garbage collection from the metropolis became their main economic activity. ¹³(Assaad And Garas 93 / 94: 2; Volpi, 1996: 16; Assaad and Bruce, 1997: 3).

The *Zabbaleen* collect garbage under the management and supervision of the *Wahiya*, who have control over the collection routes as well as access to the income generated from the collection of the waste, owing to agreements made with building owners. The *Zabbaleen* collected this monthly fee for the waste collection from the residents served, and gave it to the *Wahiya*. Using donkey carts, the *Zabbaleen* collect before dawn to enable easier collection before traffic build-ups.

In 1990, the governorate of Cairo introduced mechanized waste collection and provided loans to the *Zabbaleen* for the purchase of trucks. 84% of garbage-collecting families now use trucks (Assaad And Garas 93/94: 2-3; Assaad and Bruce, 1997: 3). In addition, the *Zabbaleen* were allowed to sell some of the waste materials (inorganic waste) as the main source of income instead of earning income through use fees as previously. With the help of family, the materials are segregated into

¹³ In 1991 daily total waste generation in Cairo is 6,000 tons of which the *Zabbaleen* collect between half (Assaad & Moharram :1991, 1).

various components: glass, paper, plastic, tin, rags and bones for sale to the recyclers. Organic waste is used for pig rearing in *Zeribas*¹⁴. The rest of the waste is disposed through burning or dumped at the lower part of the settlement (Assaad And Garas 93 /94: 2-3).

A ten year upgrading program in the 1980s helped diversify the economic activities at Mokattam, although, garbage collection has remained the core activity. Nearly half (60%) of the households in Mokattam are still involved in waste collection and related activities. Other activities include services, wage labor in the recycling family enterprises (Assaad And Bruce, 1997: 4).

3.2. Three Concepts analyze Conditions of Disempowerment of *Zabbaleen*:

3.2 A) Social Exclusion:

The *Zabbaleen* community, face social exclusion and marginalisation in various ways. As squatters they are denied many of the rights and responsibilities of citizens and are socially stigmatized, due to the nature of their work. The *Zabbaleen* live with tenure insecurity and are “denied access to the goods, services, activities and resources [including infrastructure] which are generally associated with citizenship” (Gore and Figuerido as quoted in Jackson 1999: 127-8). Garbage collection work earns them only basic survival and they face serious health hazards. The *Zabbaleen* are seen as a burden and shame to the government.

Jackson states, “social exclusion paradigms place poverty as one element of the marginalization processes producing vulnerable groups which experience disadvantage in complex material, cultural, and socio-political ways.”(Jackson 1999:126). The *Zabbaleen*, are expelled to the periphery of society. Social exclusion negatively affects resource allocation, and relations of power, agency, culture and social identity (Gore and Figuerido as quoted in Jackson 1999: 127-8).

3.2 B) Stigmatization:

According to Giddens, Stigma is defined as “any physical or social characteristic believed to be demeaning” (Giddens ,2000: 595), or “any characteristic which sets an individual or group apart from the majority of the population, with the result that the individual or group is treated with suspicion or hostility” (Giddens, 2000: 127).

¹⁴ Zeribas or Zarayeb refers to pigsty, or shed where pigs are reared.

This concept is closely related to social exclusion as well as vulnerability. In most places, poor urban dwellers, especially those working in demeaned activities like garbage collection, such as the *Zabbaleen* suffer social stigmatization and are often stereotyped. The *Zabbaleen* are deemed as ‘unclean’, of low class and are treated with disdain by the general Egyptian population. Because of their involvement in garbage sorting and confinement at home, women are also highly stigmatized and seen as dependent despite their labor contributions. As Christians, the *Zabbaleen*, are a minority compared to the Muslims. They had no access to social services like education and health inside the settlement, so they had to go outside. Their children faced derogatory comments and insults while in school, while the *Zabbaleen* women at Mokattam experience verbal abuse from Muslims both because of religion and type of work. *Zabbaleen*.

3.2 C) Vulnerability:

Moser defines vulnerability as” insecurity and sensitivity in the well-being of individuals, households and communities in the face of a changing environment, and implicit in this, their responsiveness and resilience to risks that they face during such negative changes” (Moser 1998: 3). Vulnerability is an indication that people’s capacities have been reduced (possibly through poverty’s harsh conditions), but that the role of development is to increase the capacities, to counterbalance it. (Moser 1998: 3) . Such is the life of the *Zabbaleen*.

The *Zabbaleen* live where no one else wants to. Besides the threats of eviction and loss of property, the hill on which the settlement is located is tectonically unstable and could collapse as happened in 1992. The *Zabbaleen* live side by side with the garbage from which they obtain a livelihood and are thus exposed to serious environmental and health hazards.

The most extreme vulnerability, is tenure insecurity and lack of legal title to households, which is a harsh reality for Mokattam (Moser 1998: 10). Bribes have to be paid constantly to prevent eviction and destruction of property. Instability of income is the other form of vulnerability. Earnings are not stable and barely cover basic survival. Women are totally dependent on their male members for survival not to mention the stringent cultural constraints imposed on them (especially with regards to mobility and use of labor) used by men to assert power and control over them. There is also a high rate of criminal activity, use of alcohol and drugs in this

community. Proposed government intervention is insensitive to the specificity of their way of life and economic activities. For instance, there are proposals to move the *Zarayeb* (i.e. pig pens) to the desert. This amongst other things would mean a reduction in income. The state is not perceived as a provider of security, but as a constant threat. As one interviewee put it

“Wherever the Zabbaleen live, they want to evict us. We have always lived on the margins of life. They have moved us to so many places already. What will widows and women without a man do? When we were in “Eshash” (i.e.: Tin shacks), it did not take much trouble to demolish it. But now we built buildings and permanent homes” .

According to Moser (1998:3), the most essential modes of resistance are “assets and entitlements that individuals, households, or communities can mobilize and manage in the face of hardship” The more assets people have the less vulnerable they are. The less assets one owns, the more exposed they become. The most important asset of the poor is their labor used for income generation (Moser 1998: 4). Poor people only have the “man power” to work, but not possess developed human capital assets, such as education, skills and knowledge, which can help them effectively counterbalance vulnerability. (Moser 1998: 9). *Zabbaleen* women, have no education or skills, and thus are dependent on garbage sorting from which income does not accrue directly but through male relatives.

Poverty and gender are closely interlinked. Women represent 70% of the world’s poor. The *Zabbaleen* women not only have to do their triple work (reproductive work; productive work in wage labor, and community work), but also have to ensure survival in an insecure environment. Women and children are known to be the most vulnerable to food and water scarcity, diseases and urban violence with women often acting as the “shock-absorbers” or “safety nets” by sacrificing and subjugating their own needs for the sake of other household members (Moser 1998: 11).

3.3. Disempowering Ideology: The condition of women in the *Zabbaleen* Settlement¹⁵:

Egyptian society has a prevailing patriarchal ideology which is more strictly upheld in rural areas in the form of a clear sexual division of labor, FGM etc. The *Zabbaleen*

¹⁵ In this section, I am answering my first research question.

brought along their traditional, conservative, patriarchal ideology to this settlement. As girls approach menarche and increased sexual capacity, they are seen as a risk to family honor in the event of interaction with males. Society, therefore imposed greater constraints on young women than on their male counterparts with regards to mobility and behavior and are jealously guarded by male relatives to prevent violation of family honor. However, this confinement increased their responsibilities at home. According to Assaad and Bruce(1997), young women are “shouldering the heavy burden of daily living in an urban slum in Cairo that operates like a typical village in Upper-Egypt (5). They lack “power over”, with which to minimize the obstacles at the household level and are forced to comply with these traditions.

Several constraints are used for the *restriction on women's mobility*. One respondent was only allowed to go to Sunday School in the local church and had to be accompanied by males, friends or by church members when going out of the community. Those empowered however seized “Any opportunity I had to go out of the community for a summer camp, I went and without my husband”. Church trips provide outlets for women to go out. Agency is in the women finding opportunities to go out of the community. The women therefore have minimal “power over” to minimize the constraints on mobility.

Women and girls in this garbage-collecting community, make all the traditional contributions, in terms of reproductive functions: cooking, cleaning, bearing and rearing the young and caring for the old and ill, and the livestock, in addition to garbage sorting (Assaad And Bruce: 1997, 5). After collection, garbage is dumped in the same house where the family also sleeps, eats and keeps animals. There may be as many as two truckloads depending on the family's involvement. Sorting takes four to six hours on average per day. There is no protective gear used in sorting implying exposure to health risks. Garbage is sorted divided into organic (for pigs) and inorganic for resale (Assaad And Bruce: 1997, 7). The work obviously does not leave much room women's individual agency but it at least provides minimum economic survival. The clear lack of “power over” to change the situation is here indicated.

Young unmarried girls are allowed to work outside the home to prepare for their “trousseau” or if their family is very needy. Even with the fear for safety of the girls, some types of work that maybe dangerous, like the collection of recyclable materials from the streets for resale, are still allowed. When families gamble on the safety and honor of their adolescent daughters, by allowing them to do that, considering the very traditional conservative context, such families “are deemed to be truly desperate” (Assaad And Bruce: 1997, 10 and Interviews by C. Assaad: July-August 2001). For girls like these the agency and achievement, is that even when faced with more dangers and difficulties they learned to be courageous, independent and developed friendships with other girls doing the same, rather than stay at home. However, following Mayoux’s paradigm, they lack the “power over” to refuse that type of work, and “power to” with which to access a better or safer job. Waged work of married women is thought to reflect negatively on the male breadwinner. However, in garbage-collecting families women are a crucial component of the work.

The three main obstacles for women’s work are:- 1) lack of education 2) husband’s disapproval; 3) distance from the home to working place. Certain rules and traditions do not allow women to stay out late out of their home or move too far away. It is believed that women cannot effectively combine both productive and reproductive roles. One’s husband has to decide whether or not she should work, as the respondents indicated and women are often unsuccessful in winning this favor. A husband, who allows his wife to work, is looked down upon. Such families also present severe constraints to the advancement of women’s careers. If allowed to work before marriage in order to prepare her “trousseau”, the favor may be curtailed after marriage.

In the past girls were *married* before the legal age of sixteen. Only the permission of the family was required. Even authorities including doctors and religious leaders permitted such marriage irrespective of the girl’s age. This was to ensure virginity which would be tested on the wedding night (Assaad And Bruce: 1997, 6). Virginity is therefore considered a vital *resource* for a woman because it determines her *marriageability*, and acceptance in the community. In the eyes of the family a married woman is a high achiever and a source of pride for them for having reached that stage. However, there is hardly any agency on the part of the woman, especially in cases of

early marriage. At an older age, women may participate in spouse selection, but not entirely.

Besides the violation of the girl's right, early marriage may have negative effects on one's physical and emotional well-being. Moreover, depending on the quality of the marriage, her autonomy and dignity within that marriage are also affected.

Negotiations for engagement in work outside the home are also more difficult as are reproductive choices (Assaad And Bruce: 1997, 6). As inherited from rural culture, the transition from girlhood to womanhood is very brief and full of restrictions and difficulties. The younger one is, the lower the chances of spouse selection by self and often those selected tend to be far much older. However, such marriages sometimes provide economic security and escape from abuse by immediate family. Marriage in this regard may confer some status and dignity on the woman, which is a resource.

Women in Mokattam, are expected to give birth early on in marriage preferably to a son, so as prove her *fertility /sexuality*. Son preference is prevalent in this community, as it was in rural Upper-Egypt. A boy is seen to “*carry the family name*. *In the case of a girl it is a different story, since after she is educated (if she is), and brought up, she goes ready-made to someone else*”. As in other patriarchal systems, there is not much value placed on girls in this community. The number of children a woman has, especially the number of sons is a resource to them, enabling them to earn ‘important and prestigious’ titles such as “mother of son”,.. This is status enhancing especially in their family-in-law. It may also enhance their agency and achievements.

In addition, to early marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is also a common practice in this community as is in the rest of Egypt. Around 90% of the women in that community are circumcised and are confronted with the disempowering consequences with regards to sexuality and fertility. That the women had no power to reject the imposition of this tradition on themselves and their daughters, is a clear indication of their lack of “power over”.

The *particular vulnerabilities*, women in Mokattam face include: lack of access to education, discrimination domestic violence and harassment during garbage collection or in street. According to a 1993 survey, only 56% of girls between six to nineteen

had been enrolled in school at some point of their life or another. 70% of these were still in school, and 27% had dropped out. The lack of enrollment for girls results from over-burdening work at home, especially in garbage-collecting families as well as the pressure for early marriage. When there is not enough money in a family for education of children, boys are given preference, as investment in a girl in this sense is seen as a loss, as her future is in marriage and relocation to another family. It is believed that men do not like educated women for wives especially if they themselves are illiterate. Thus, women are prevented from education lest they are rejected by men and bring dishonor to the family by remaining unmarried. More than education and rights, marriage is thought to bring social acceptability and economic security.

Mokattam is a microcosm of Egyptian society, which sees “ a respected womanly identity is conferred almost exclusively through marriage”(Assaad And Bruce: 1997, 6). By this, they are denied a vital resource material, social and human, as well as a lack of “power to” access it. Room for agency is also denied. Some women, however, still find jobs other than garbage collection, (cleaner in a school, sewing items from home and so on) and are able to survive. This is still an *achievement*.

In the 10 in depth-interviews I conducted, only two women were educated up till diploma/ certificate level (Commercial, technical, agricultural). For the 6 who had never been to school, the reasons ranged from: lack of money for fees because parents were too poor parents disinterested, parent’s death; or had to work and couldn’t go to School. Two cases had had 7- 8 years of schooling, but stopped to get married. Moreover, if a girl went to school, she is expected to help in household chores upon return leaving her little time to study. There is no lack of “power from within”, indicated in those who did not attend school. On the contrary, they were envious and jealous of their brothers who went and were desperate to attend school. But, they had a lack of “power to” access education.

The *bias and discrimination against girls* is another source of vulnerability. Girls are never treated the same as boys. When boy’s err, there are hardly any reproaches but girls are constantly reproached. Even brothers have power of punishment and instruction over their sisters. Boys get priorities in everything while girls are provided with fewer resources, thus made more vulnerable. For instance some of the women in

this community do not have birth certificates, whereas their brothers do, because they had to register for school. One respondent wished, she had a brother (she only has one sister and her mother is a widow), to assist her in carrying the burden of the household as she has had to take all the responsibilities, in a community that does not recognize women's contributions.

Domestic violence, is pervasive in the community, especially in the case of drunken husbands. "Husbands beat their wives. The whole area has these problems". It is very difficult to be a woman in this community" as one of the respondents described the situation of women in the community. The woman has the burden of all household responsibilities on her shoulders – feeding the children, washing , cleaning in addition to sorting garbage. There often no assistance in these roles by the men and failure to have all 'the things ready' for him, results in beatings. "When a woman is beaten or verbally abused by her husband, a short return to her paternal home may bring about an apology and reconciliation, but it is usually temporary. Despite this slight agency, there is therefore lack of "power over" to change the situation.

With regards to harassment and unsafety, while working in garbage, many of the women expressed fear and anger at having to ride on donkey carts in the middle of the night to work and get exposed to danger. Several interviewees, mentioned the high level of sexual harassment, they face as they climb the backward stairs of apartment buildings and they fear to pass near coffee shops where some 'do-nothing' men sit around all day, but otherwise, they felt secure in the community. Garbage collector's daughters are considered worthless and hence the harassment and abuse. One of the respondents had mixed feelings about riding and guarding the donkey carts. On the one hand, sadness for not being able to go to school, but on the other hand, pride for . being the daughter of a garbage collector, believing that their profession was a legitimate means of earning a livelihood. Women in this community suffer an extreme lack of choice.

Chapter 4: Empowerment Opportunities: APE's holistic Approach

4.1 APE and the Opportunities provided to the community

One of the main actors in the *Zabbaleen* community is the Association For The Protection of the Environment (APE). APE, an NGO, was established in 1984 at the end of a ten-year urban upgrading program, which had been initiated by the First Egypt Development Project by the governorate of Cairo and the World Bank. The aim of the initiative was to improve the “squalid” living conditions in which the *Zabbaleen* lived and to integrate their garbage collection services for a more efficient solid waste management system in Cairo (Assaad and Garas 93/ 94:1, Volpi, 1996: 17-18). At its formation, APE was responsible for the compost plant. This mandate changed three years later to include human development through income generating activities for adolescent and young women and the formation of a health and a crises committee (Assaad And Garas, 1993/94: 34; Assaad And Bruce, 1997:4).

In this mandate, APE was to use participatory approaches to decision-making, involving the community in expressing their needs, while emphasizing financial and environmental sustainability in all aspects of their work. APE worked with the most vulnerable groups in the community especially women and young girls and the idea was to provide them with the opportunities to empower them.

Several approaches were tried between 1987 and 1993. APE was initially more inclined towards the community development approach, but later, an anti-poverty approach (WID) with some components of women's empowerment, was adopted. APE now focuses purely on empowerment more in line with the GAD Approach¹⁶ (Assaad And Garas, 1993/94: 40- 41). APE aims at:

”protect the environment particularly in relation to solid waste management and human resource development. Its aim is to empower the most vulnerable groups [women] through providing them with education, literacy, income generation, preventive health care, crises management, leadership training and personality development. Its methods are guided by the principles of

¹⁶ “Women In Development” (WID) approach focuses on integrating women in the development process, through of income generating activities and it included concepts of welfare, equity, anti-poverty and efficiency. The “Gender and Development” (GAD) approach, focuses on asymmetrical relations between men and women with emphasis on greater self-reliance by women. Empowerment is an integral component of GAD (Moser, 1989: 13; Jackson 1999:129).

community participation and sustainable development.” (Assaad And Garas, 1993/94: 40- 41).

The empowerment of women and girls became, APE’s main priority, along side with their previous commitments. This shift was in response to the unfair conditions in which women lived, namely, their lack of access to education and skills and lack of permission to work. The young women recruited to work at APE were aged between 12 and 30 years. The opportunity to work (and to go out of the house and leave temporarily the “squalor “of garbage sorting) and gain income, was presumed to contribute to a change in the status and condition of these women, within their families and community at large (Assaad And Bruce , 1997:10).

APE sponsors three income generating activities, namely:- 1) Rug weaving; 2) Recycled Paper; 3) Patchwork. Along with all three IGA’s, APE provides literacy classes, opportunity to pursue education, health awareness classes, management and leadership skills training. This project provides a conducive environment for eventual empowerment of the women, within the household and in the community at large (Assaad And Bruce, 1997: 16).

4.2. Economic Opportunities

4.2 A) Rug Weaving

Rug weaving began in 1987, with two looms and two trainers and one volunteer to supervise. By 1991 there were eight new looms and up to 100 trainees a year. The project has been expanding successfully.. This IGA included training in handicrafts to encourage economic empowerment of the women and served as an entry point to other interventions, such as literacy, health care and personality development. (Assaad and Garas, 1993/ 94: 47-48). Since this was the first IGA to be established, an anti-poverty approach was preferred. Strict rules were employed in selecting the neediest women Those past puberty and going out in on garbage carts got priority. Secondly, those who collected garbage in the municipal bins in the streets were selected (Kamel 1994: 27-28).

Flexibility in rug-weaving to allow one to master the skills (between 3-6 months). The girls received about 40 LE a month (\$ 11.80) during training and were

encouraged to enroll in literacy classes (those illiterate). After mastering the weaving skills, they are given loans, to buy a loom. By the end of 1995, 500 girls had received training in rug weaving and 225 had taken out loans to buy looms. Weaving is done at home where there's sufficient space for the loom. Raw material and orders are obtained from APE and completed rugs are returned there for marketing. (Assaad And Bruce, 1997: 10). The amount of money earned ranges between 80 to 300LE, depending on skills and quality of products. Those without space for the loom or no money to buy the loom, take turns twice a week to work at the APE premises (Assaad And Bruce, 1997: 10).

4.2 B) Recycled Paper

The recycling of paper project began, when a young woman from the settlement was selected to represent her community at a YWCA waste-recycling workshop in Crete in 1991 where she learned the basic techniques of paper recycling. The techniques were refined and passed to other women and girls. The activity was officially launched in 1993. Girls were taught leadership and management skills, to prepare them to manage the daily tasks on their own, to ensure sustainability. By 1997, 63 women and girls had been trained in paper-recycling. This is now one of the most successful projects of APE. Goods are sold in bazaars and through contacts, locally and abroad including Europe and North America. There is also the embroidery project, which employs 40 home-workers (Assaad And Garas, 1993/94: 44).

The recruitment techniques for the older IGA's are different than for the recycled paper. The women in the paper project receive three months of training, during which they do not receive payment. Later, they are grouped into teams and are paid a base salary of 40 L.E, which is increased with time. Team leaders are selected from among the young women to supervise the production process (production line) from the beginning to the end. There are no home-workers in this project as all women work in APE's premises¹⁷.

Paper-recycling is organized differently from rug weaving and patchwork. Rug weaving / patchwork as income generating activities were developed by a volunteer as

See Assaad And Bruce , (1997: 12) for details on the paper production process.

an entry point to functional literacy, health education and personality development. Qualified volunteers helped train in new designs and marketing ideas, yet, the economic entry point was still present (WID approach, close to Ripple). Paper - recycling project, on the other hand, came at a later stage and the approach was developed step-by-step by strengthening and coordinating existing approaches and with a strong empowerment component. Human development, was the main focus for all activities, although each IGA followed a different path in implementing it. In the paper-project, women and girls were trained as health workers, and involved in literacy programs (as entry points).

“Health care was the entry point. It was followed, by child training, preparation for schooling, functional literacy and personality development. And then moved to the actual IGA, which is the paper-recycling as an income generating project”(GAD, comprehensive)”. (Assaad And Garas: 93/94, 49).

APE as a whole in the last decade has focused on the comprehensive approach (Assaad And Garas, 1993/ 94: 49).

4.2 C) Patchwork

Patchwork began fairly recently, in 1997. This is a home-worker project, which allows flexibility for women to continue the training and to earn income, while at home. Loans to buy sewing machines and space to work at APE premises are provided. Women are paid for the volume and quality of their products (Assaad And Bruce, 1997: 11).

With regards to these income generating activities, after training, the women become full-time employees working at APE from 8:00 to 3:00 for six days a week. They may also work at home- as “ cottage industry weaver / or productive families”. Working at home is encouraged in rug-weaving and patchwork because of shortage of space at APE. Reaching this number of women through home-working is however a great achievement.

4.2 D) Furthering one’s career path

The secretariat became important for two reasons. Overall administration of APE became demanding and the need was felt to provide career opportunities for some

women working in the IGAs. These women became part of the larger secretariat, with specialized functions, in various responsibilities of APE project. So secretaries were assigned for rug weaving and patchwork and for paper recycling.

4.3. Non-economic (educational) Opportunities/ Services

4.3 A) Child Care

A Children's club or APE's *crèche*, was inaugurated in 1993 to offer kindergarten services for children aged 4-6 years old. It also provided opportunities for the children to escape from the garbage infested streets and households, at least for a few hours a day. The children attend pre-school activities and are taken on day trips outside of the community and are encouraged and facilitated to enter mainstream governmental school system. Literacy classes are provided for older children. There is also a day care center for babies, to allow working women of the community to leave the children in a safe and clean environment. The children are fed and engaged in learning sessions (Faccini, 1999: 13).

4.3 B) Literacy, Education and other sources of Knowledge

Non-literacy based instruction on personal hygiene, hair hygiene, environmental hygiene, going on camps and field trips with amusement (singing, dancing, plays and skits, role plays which depict crucial social issues and dilemmas) are also provided. During the trips the volunteers teach discipline, obedience and tidiness. As Kamel, (the former president of APE)puts it:

” to the casual, uninformed observer, this whole enterprise seemed like an income generating project for garbage collector girls [...] However, a closer examination revealed the true nature of this project: a non-formal model of learning based upon the [income generating activities] aiming to create the conditions that would generate a desire and demand for literacy [...]”. (Kamel 1994:40).

She sees it as a way of “conscientization” of the young women’s minds. APE also holds a bi-monthly, Monday noontime “parties”, which are open to all women and provide them with a chance to discuss all issues, including crisis management, sales, salaries, announcements etc (Kamel 1994: 40).

Literacy is both an independent intervention and an outcome of income generation. In order to produce the artifacts, rugs and patchwork, women need to learn how to read

and write and to do simple calculations (Faccini 1999: 21). This led to the integration of this goal into all programs at APE, with all women enrolling in literacy classes, for their own professional success and development as individuals. They are encouraged to go beyond the basic level and to join the mainstream schooling system, but it depends on many factors including individual capabilities, work demands and family constraints. A few have continued through distance learning to the level of second year high school, obtained a diploma / certificate (Commercial, technical, agricultural).

4.3 C) English and Computer Classes

This opportunity is optional. Although, all women have access to these classes, in-depth classes are taken up by those whose jobs require further sharpening of spoken or written English (bazaars or secretarial work with buyers abroad) and in computer programs such as: Dos, Excel, WORD.

4.3 D) Attendance of Bazaars, Workshops And Conferences

Articrafts and products are sold in bazaars and through sales in art galleries, articrafts shops and bookshops as well as abroad. Bazaars are held in foreign language schools around Christmas time (e.g CAC, German School), foreign embassies, European Bazaars, in five star hotels, in women's guild in upper class income areas.

APE facilitates the attendance of young women at workshops and conferences. Some workshops concern children's day care issues, for those working in the children's club. While others focus on a variety of issues, such as, women's rights, computers, articrafts, women's voting rights, as well as the environment. Conferences covered making of recycled paper, and urban poverty issues in Crete and Turkey. These opportunities have life-long impacts on the APE women.

4.3 E) Health and crises committees

The health and development committee is aimed at increasing the participation of young women and girls through training and vaccination campaigns within the community (Faccini, 1999: 13). The women became agents for change within their communities reaching out to families, advising them on maternal, child -care and personal hygiene. Through the household-visiting program, they managed to increase

childhood immunization from 2% to 50% in one year (Assaad And Bruce, 1997: 14).

The program “El Fatah El Morahqa/ or the “adolescent girls’ initiative” created in 1993, trained young women from the poorest garbage-collecting families in reproductive health care. The curriculum included: household sanitation, nutrition, childhood immunization and appropriate care during pregnancy. Strong messages were also passed discouraging FGM. Even though, circumcised themselves, the young trainees were enthusiastic in carrying the anti-FGM message to the community. (Assaad And Bruce, 1997: 16). CEDPA¹⁸sponsored the “New Horizons”, another educational awareness program, which was not only dealing with health, early marriage, reproductive health, FGM, diseases, infections and child nutrition, but also on personal hygiene, on the importance of girl’s education, women’s and girls’ rights and gender relations. This provided the young women with an opportunity to discuss socio-cultural issues and traditions.

The *crisis management committee*, was created in response to the particular difficulties faced by the urban poor (economic difficulties, sickness and death/ female headed-households. This committee also encourages “delayed and voluntary marriages for the women”. A 500 L.E. (\$ 148) was promised to the young women working at APE, if they deferred her marriage and freely consented to their marriage (Assaad And Bruce, 1997: 19).

4.4 Volunteers and Funding

APE functions mainly through volunteers, who believe that the empowerment of women, can lead to a change in oppressive structures within the settlement. This would improve their status and assist them in their personal transformation. APE's activities are partly funded, but mostly the NGO re-invests its profit back into the various programs. Also leadership and management workshops are periodically organized in order to provide the girls with the opportunity to learn the tools for their emancipation and the skills required for the sustainable management of the project.

In conclusion, in the last ten years APE has followed a comprehensive women’s

¹⁸ CEDPA is a development-funding agency focusing on women and development issues.

empowerment approach. The chronological review of the development of APE's goals, begins with the community development and anti-poverty approaches and later adopts a more inclusive form of empowerment, to allow the women to expand their 'power base' using different interventions and entry points. APE has been quite successful in reaching 70% percent of the garbage collecting households, through one or more of its activities. Moreover, a third of the households in this community have benefited from APE supported activities (Assaad and Bruce, 1997: 4). The opportunities provided by APE to the women, are directed towards the four dimensions of empowerment in order to assist them, in gaining the four forms of power.

Chapter 5: Empowerment Dynamics: Processes and impacts of APE’s opportunities on the women

This chapter deals with the field responses of a sample of fifty-five young women aged between 15 to 40 years, working at APE. It examines their perception of empowerment through APE’s opportunities, and the impact it had on their lives and their families. Ten in-depth interviews were selected for further probing of the answers gathered from the questionnaires, however, only two of these interviews will appear as case studies, and will be interwoven with comments from others.

5.1 Some General Results of the Questionnaires:

Table 1: Sample Size And Characteristics

| Type of Project | Paper Project | Rug Weaving | Patchwork | Embroidery | Children’s Club | Secretariat | Total |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|-------------|-------|
| # at APE Premises | 18 | 9 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 39 |
| Home-workers | 4 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| Total | 22 | 13 | 9 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 55 |

The questionnaire and in depth interviews have revealed the following:

A) Number of Years of Involvement at APE:

Those who stayed the longest, had the most exposure to opportunities offered by APE, and therefore have benefited from a stronger impact on their lives. Some of them started very young as early as 10-12 years old. Many of their views were shaped and molded by APE, especially with regards to marriage, FGM, spacing and number of children. These being the formative years in one’s life, influence in certain directions can be quite strong. The length of time at APE provides the young women with the resource of gained knowledge, enhancing their agency and achievement.

Table 2: Length of Involvement of women at APE:

| Length of Involvement in Years | 1-2 | 2-4 | 4-6 | 6-8 | 8-10 | More than 10 |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|--------------|
| Number of Persons | 2 | 5 | 10 | 16 | 8 | 13 |

B) APE's Work Opportunities

APE provided training (3Months) after which the women are employed. But they also have the choice of working at home on a per-piece basis. APE assists them in buying the loom or a sewing machine to enable this. The paper-recycling project was the first of its kind in Egypt and the Middle East.

In APE they could grow on the job, learn new skills and shift into other positions. Once married, their newly born babies can be cared for at the nursery APE established for that purpose. In addition, APE provides increased access to opportunities, giving the participants power to negotiate with husbands and parents-in-law. Workers are allowed to change positions within the APE activities, to be either regular workers at APE premises or work from home. Finally, they can progress from a beginner trainee to a leader (or trainer) or administrator. The study's findings on this are as on the table below:

Table 3: Upward Professional Mobility:

| Upward Professional Mobility | Leader/Trainer | Worker | Home-workers |
|------------------------------|----------------|--------|--------------|
| Initial Position | 2 | 37 | 16 |
| Current Position | 33 | 10 | 12 |

Examples of the professional mobility could be cited. One worker started in the line of production but has risen to the position of supervisor in the marbleized coloring process. Another has risen to the level of sub-assistant leader of the recycled paper machine maintenance group. Yet another started working on a loom at home, had progressed to the position of carpet storage room keeper, and later to sales. “ *This is a great job. With time and patience, one receives what one needs. And one's dreams do come true*”, she says. This seems to reflect agency and achievement indicated by the rise in the professional hierarchy.

APE provides a range of salaries starting from L.E 40 L.E a month during training gradually rising to more than L.E 300. The women spend most of their income on food, personal trousseau and clothing.

It is interesting to note that the higher the income-bracket of a woman, the higher the contribution to the household budget providing her with stronger decision-making powers at the household level and respect.

Table 4: Relationship between higher income bracket and change in the position of the family: ¹⁹

| Change in the Position of the Family Higher Bracket Salary In L.E. | Contribution to decision-making & Control over Income | Contribution to decision-making, control over own income & more respect |
|--|--|---|
| 160-200 | 7 | 3 |
| 210-260 | 9 | 5 |
| 270-310 | 1 | 1 |
| More than 310 | 3 | 9 |

APE emphasizes inter-communication skills, the ability to dialogue and to negotiate. Volunteers serve as models and points of reference. The women refer to APE volunteers for counseling and in time of financial or family crises.

Most respondents gave positive reasons for joining APE. Examples of these are: “ I began to work because of my parents encouragement, my desire to work and not to be idle and my wish for my own income” and to “get a chance to get out of the community, while meeting new people”. While another declared that she could have continued to study but “ I needed to work and to prove to my family, that I could earn. So I took the decision to work”. This denotes “power over”, where the women overcome challenges and decide to work and are in control of their productive assets. It is also an example of “agency”, or “power from within”, which is the motivation that leads to action. In this case, it is an individual decision-making process.

In addition, to the above economic interventions, there are also non-economic interventions, such as workshops, conferences and bazaars, English, Computer, literacy and education, which were made possible for participants by APE. All these are opportunities of a life-time for the women working in APE.

¹⁹ The dollar exchange rate to the Egyptian pound at the time of field work, was 1\$= 4L.E.

5.2. Results and Impacts with Processes and Dynamics of Empowerment:

The ten case studies help further substantiate the theoretical framework in demonstrating APE's empowerment processes and dynamics. Only two of these case studies are presented (One married and one unmarried), interwoven with comments on some aspects from the other cases.²⁰

A) Case One: Farha

Farha's case demonstrates the importance of the economic and educational empowerment in the way she began at APE, and how she worked her way to positions of responsibility.

Economic Empowerment

Farha began working at the inception of the recycled paper project. Initially, she was merely learning and helping, but was later identified as talented and skilled. She then became responsible for a group of five other women on the line of production. This was followed by further responsibility, where she assisted the previous project manager, in managing the project. After his departure, Farha became the supervisor of the entire project responsible for the day-to-day management and planning.

Farha says that she did not expect any of this, and thinks that the responsibility of the entire project is a real load for her. “ *The volunteers told me that they trusted me, and would help me to carry out these responsibilities well. I hope that I am at the level of the trust they put in me*”. The resources included economic security, and the use of “power to” and “over”. Her agency is recognized in the fact that she tried to excel in her work, through which she became the leader of the project.

Economic affecting socio-cultural Empowerment

Farha has climbed the ladder of professional hierarchy during the course of her participation. She began, as a young teen-ager enrolled in literacy and sewing classes, then as a trainee in the paper project at L.E 40 a month, and has now become the supervisor earning L.E 313 a month. She and her husband pool their incomes and then allocate it according to the various needs of the household. “ *We are very much in agreement concerning these issues and so we make a joint decision. Our salaries*

²⁰ Owing to limitations of space, only three case studies were selected. All names of interviewees have been changed and pseudonyms have replaced them. The married one is Farha, with some comments from two others. The one that is unmarried is: Suzane with some comments from another respondent.

combined are usually enough to cover the expenses, unless a child is ill, then shortages could occur”.

Farha lives with her in-laws. She and her husband are major contributors to the household needs like food, especially because the husband’s siblings are younger and need his help. The bulk of their income is used for their own and their children’s expenses. For her personal clothing, she may use her own income or request her husband to buy it for her, if needs be, he will even borrow money to give her what she needs. Farha has very good time management in terms of combining her work at home and the duties associated with her job. In addition, she attends the workshops and trips that APE offers. Farha says that she could have stopped working, but she says “*I chose to work*”, because of the possibilities it gives her. Farha is a good and clear example of achievements. This example indicates the existence of economic security, mobility, and the ability to buy small and large items for the household or self, because of the access to the income and its increase.

The upward professional mobility, accompanied by economic empowerment, is echoed in many of the cases, but it is not always translated into socio-cultural empowerment, or at least not with the same magnitude. In the case of Amina, who now works in the secretariat of APE, she had to persevere to ensure that she would continue working at APE. This is so, since she married into a garbage collecting family, and her duty dictated by tradition would have been to sort garbage. But she refused categorically, and earned the respect of her in-laws, indicating “power to” transformed into “power over”. In contrast to the above two cases, Sophie, another married woman, also climbed the hierarchical ladder and is now responsible for handling all incoming orders and receipts for the carpet weaving and patchwork. She now earns L.E. 496, and she spends 90% of it on the household, and hides 10% from her husband, so as to cover her daughter’s additional expenses. Sophie has become socially and economically empowered, which leads to jealousy on the part of her husband, who now feels inferior. She has not succeeded in making him understand about development. Her subtle tactic is to save some money to enjoy the economic resources she gained. This is a form of “power to” transformed into “power over”, in at least reducing the “power over” her.

Educational Empowerment- socio-cultural empowerment

Farha uses the knowledge acquired while at APE, as a resource that helped her in her work at home and in transferring to other occupations. She believes that what she learned at APE is invaluable, starting with the literacy classes and later her further education (hoping to reach diploma level), English and computer skills. “*What I learned in computer is very valuable. I would not have learned all of this in another job. I have also benefited a great deal from learning how to do recycled paper. I could even do it at home, but would need an outlet to sell them in. The most important of all, I have learned communication skills, and how to deal with people and communicate effectively*”. These are some of the resources gained by Farha through APE. Agency here is in the fact that she likes her work and would not want to change it. This indicates “power from within” transformed into “power to” access the resources, as well as the “power over” these resources. Also, the epitomy of Sophie’s personal empowerment was attending two conferences abroad, in Turkey and Jordan, having to speak (proudly) about her community.

From the reproductive health courses, Farha has learned of the harmful traditional practices (FGM). She says “*for sure we are (today) suffering because of FGM. My husband is 100% convinced that we should resist this tradition. Sometimes I wish I had not been circumcised after what I heard and experienced myself*”. The agency and achievement is to mobilize as many people as possible to stop this practice and to encourage them to spread this information to all their neighbors and relatives.

Sophie remembers her own trauma, and wants to protect her daughter and relatives from FGM. She succeeded in convincing her husband that FGM is not necessary for their daughter. It suffices to say that Sophie was the person responsible for the team, which pressured the priest of the area to expel a mid wife who had come from Upper-Egypt, to perform 20 operations. Sophie was enraged and prompted collective action with other women, indicating all four forms of power. Her case represents a powerful case of “power with” (solidarity amongst women). It also includes the critical awareness of these harmful traditions and how to fight against them.

Educational-Socio-cultural Traditions

In addition, all of the lessons on gender relations that Farha learned in the CEDPA

course, influenced her partner selection. She waited until the age of twenty to get married. She knew her husband from before, because he is her neighbor and they grew up together. “ *I selected him out of three other suitors*”. She feels fulfilled with him, and he is an understanding person. Farha and her husband make decisions jointly concerning many issues including the number of children (they have two and would like to have one more). They have equitable gender relations. Sophie selected her husband herself, but she now regrets her choice.

Farha is a clear example of "power from within" (agency) and “power to” (access to resources & opportunities), where women grow with ambition and hard work. She has increased her desire to excel in her job, gain knowledge and have equal rights to resources. This is transformed into “power over”, which is control over resources (achievement). She represents the dynamics of a high achievement in economic and educational empowerment, leading to a strong social and cultural empowerment.

B) Case Two: Suzane

Suzane, comes from a Female headed household. Her mother has been a widow for over twenty years. Suzane takes care of her mother and married sister.

Educational -Socio-cultural Empowerment

Suzane emphasizes education, training and exposure as basic sources for her empowerment. She explains that through APE and her attending bazaars and workshops, she has learned about various issues on identity, voting cards and procedures for women. At Marketing Link, she learned the basics of marketing and environmental training. She said that all those who attended the workshop were with BA and MA, and she felt so proud of herself being invited to such a conference where she only has a commercial diploma.

“ What job in any other place would give me all of these opportunities”. “These workshops have helped me a great deal in my personal growth. I can go outside of the community and be confident about myself totally.

Suzane also says that if she had not been working at APE, she would not have been given *an arena to formulate and vocalize an opinion.*

"I have gained courage and more experience in my work, which has benefited me and my family. When I do get married, I will have a strong position with my husband. If I had not worked in a professional context, I would have been a totally different personality. My personality has changed 80%. I am now respectful of others opinions.

I listen to all sides of an opinion or point of views. In this community, a man orders and a woman obeys. And sometimes men order wives or daughters to stay at home. Men generally do not listen to women. But in my case that will not happen and I will not allow it to happen”.

This is a clear example of agency and achievement, where Suzane uses her increased self-confidence “power from within”, to transform it into “power to” and “power over”.

Regarding marriage, Suzane feels she needs someone that is at the same level of education, who has taken a diploma or even higher, but definitely not less than her, to facilitate communication. She believes in total equality between women and men. There must be a good understanding on both sides, not only a sacrifice on one side. *“I can listen to what my future husband has to say, but I have to give my own opinion. Even if I make the wrong decision, but it is still my decision. If we are cooperating together, then we would both have to listen to each other’s views”.*

Suzane sometimes wishes that she had a brother who could do things for her. *“I myself would have preferred to be a boy because of the discrimination I have faced in my life, being a girl”.* But the fact of the matter is that now she handles all the family situations and is described by her neighbors as being “equal to a 100 men” in her wit and courage. This is a good example of agency and achievement. She believes in equality, but there are situations where a man is needed not a woman, yet since her father died, she has had to do it.

Economic and Educational Empowerment

Suzane, was able to attend a course in the British Council for English, since she needed it in her job as specialized secretary for the entire paper project. She has also been exposed to training on the internet. That is a skill, which can be very valuable and could be transformed into an economic gain quickly. Her agency is clear in pursuing more opportunities in order to achieve more within APE. She says that “do not think that a lot of people would leave APE, because no matter what the salaries somewhere else are, here they are quite generous and it is a nice working environment”.

These are all resources which provided her with the “power from within” to be ambitious to access the resources, and the “power to” and “power over” to control

these resources in order to advance herself. Suzane represents a particular case of interconnections between high economic and educational achievement leading to a strong socio-cultural position.

Suzanne acknowledges that APE's interventions have benefited the entire community, especially in terms of employment creation. With their salaries, they could sustain entire households and could sometimes buy their own "trousseau". This is echoed in the views of the unmarried women in my sample who were pleased to be independent in covering the expenses of their "trousseau". They usually invest their money in Rotating Savings Mechanism (RSM), providing them with autonomy from the family, and earning them respect and a bargaining position.

There is one exception in the unmarried cases, where economic empowerment has more difficulty of being translated into socio-cultural empowerment. This respondent's experience at APE has been overshadowed by her father's harsh demands on her life. She is continuously fighting for the right to continue her work at APE, against her parents' wishes. *"I have learned a great deal at APE. I have learned how to read and write and I have learned the skill, of working on recycled paper machinery, that too is a transferable skill"*. She says *"APE has changed my whole life"*. This indicates that she has internally changed a great deal, but that is in an unfriendly environment. She suffers from domestic violence on the hands of her father. Her work at APE has allowed her to spend on her "trousseau" and that of her sister. She hopes to get married to get out of the household to exercise her agency. Thus, APE gave her the "power from within" (aspirations and more confidence) and "power to" (access to resources), but it has not been translated into "power over", since she is constrained by her parents.

If we look at the testimonies in the two cases cited above (and others) in light of the answers of the fifty-five respondents of the questionnaire, there seems to be a strong correlation between them. It becomes obvious that the holistic approach to empowerment as practiced by APE has fulfilled its objectives. It is mainly due to the interaction between the economic, educational and socio-cultural components of the interventions and the constant interactions between the workers, volunteers and other NGOs outside Mokattam. I also observe that empowerment dynamics do not occur in a vacuum, they interact within a familial context. In almost all cases, (with some

exceptions) APE was able to initiate a process of change within the household to allow room for empowerment of the women.

5.3 Synthesis of the impacts And Dynamics of interaction between the

Dimensions:

Both the responses in the questionnaire and case studies allow me to make the following observations:

1-Economic empowerment:

Based on the first six indicators of Hashemi and Riley, the women working at APE have scored on the first four, which are increased mobility because of working at APE; access to economic security (through employment), a woman's productive asset and savings; her ability to purchase small items or larger purchases (clothing of children and herself). The indicators on involvement in major decisions and purchases, and relative freedom from domination by the family vary according to the cases. Thus, it appears that many of the vulnerabilities women used to face in Mokattam, have been remedied. The last two indicators are political in nature and are not dealt with here. But it is a potential for which APE is already preparing for (issuing voting cards and legal rights awareness).

2- Educational Empowerment: (which cannot be separated from the socio-cultural)

APE provides opportunities to expand one's horizons and receive an education ("practical skills), not only in the formal sense, but also in the sense of "life skills", which allow for a higher quality of healthy living. This includes: literacy, education, health awareness classes, attending bazaars, workshops, conferences. It is important to note that in the case of educational empowerment, it is linked to what the women themselves refer to as personal empowerment. To them education enhances them personally.

3- Education's Effect of socio-cultural Empowerment

With regards to the health awareness classes that the women attend, ("Al Fatat Al Morahqa" or CEDPA's New Horizons"), are an integral part of the educational empowerment, since these two programs discuss issues of early marriage, reproductive health, family planning, FGM, and they also tackle women's rights (gender relations) and on girls' rights. It is interesting to note that many of the women were able to learn a great deal from these health awareness classes to the

extent that they have observed change in their personality and in their position within the family and community. Thus, they become a reference for these issues in their households and communities. For example, in terms of the number of children of the 30 married women in the sample, five have no children, 16 have between one to two children and nine have between 3 to 4 children. This partly reflects significant change in the mind set with regards to fertility.

In the New Horizons course, had a substantial impact on the women working at APE. Respondents claimed that has helped them make informed decisions concerning marriage, selection of partner, fertility, gender relations, education of girls and non-discrimination against them. These courses also discussed the issue of domestic violence. The women became more conscious and aware of domestic violence in their community, though the majority do not experience it themselves.

In the case of, the stigma associated with this community, the majority of the women in my sample stated that they are proud of being from this community, and do not feel stigmatized as before. APE has included in all its trainings, that the women should be proud of their profession and community.

Forty out of the 53 respondents answered that the knowledge they gained at APE has allowed them to: 1) contribute to family decisions, 2) to be taken seriously and 3) to express themselves vocally, especially when they do not like something. The exposure and access to the resource of knowledge on these issues is crucial for the empowerment of these women. This provides them the opportunity to expand their “power from within”, including their self-confidence, assertiveness and consciousness about issues that concern their every day life and decisions. Belonging to APE also allows to increase their “power to” have access to opportunities and resources. The knowledge gained enhances their “power over”, through providing them with self-reliance with which they can help their families. The fact that the women can now assist their families and community with their advice is an exercise of their agency.

Another main component, is the literacy classes, where the women have also experienced a change in personality due to becoming literate. Out of 42 who took literacy classes, 32 that they were able to contribute to the family decision-making process and to express themselves clearly, thus, exercising their agency. Those who

did not attend maybe already educated or are home-workers who do not always find the time to attend classes. But they are a minority. Out of the 33 respondents who are pursuing their education, 28 of them are in the process of pursuing their education till the diploma level. This is an indication of the transformation of the “power from within” to the “power to” access the resource / opportunity of continuing education, which would not otherwise be possible. This becomes in some cases, transformed into “power over”, where they become independent in making their own decisions. This shapes their agency and the achievement becomes the contribution they can then make to the decision-making process within the household. Being educated in this community (especially for women) has its prestige and ensures them stronger contribution within the family and vocal expression concerning their views. Their focus was on pursuing their schooling from home, as they were working at APE.

Learning English and computer also has a positive effect on women’s position and respect within the family. Of the 33 respondents who attended classes, only 25 of them expressed their agreement with the notion that English and computer skills help them to have transferable skills to other job opportunities and to use it at APE. This provides them with self-esteem and confidence. Those who have been involved for a long time, have a working form of English, which they use when there are visitors (to APE) or when they attend workshops, bazaars and conferences.

An important point to remember is the fact that the young women of APE are trained on many activities, including the production line, working on the bath tub with the paper pulp, working at the machine, at the drying process, or the artcrafts. During the training and for a period after the women are introduced to this rotation of positions and skills, until they find where they excel and enjoy the most. Once that occurs they become stabilized in that position, and could get promoted within it. This produces women who are multi-skilled and who could transfer to other jobs. This multi-task training, is a resource in itself, it provides them with the opportunity to develop more transferable skills to other jobs. Thus, using their agency to achieve their goals. This is an indication of “power to” and “power over”.

In addition, these young women have participated in bazaars, and some attend workshops and conferences. This experience enriches the young women, through

being exposed to new places and meeting with other people. This is a valuable resource in a community, which is normally very strict with their women and do not allow them to go out much. With APE they are able to do that, which is also an exercise of their agency, because they face some constraints on the household front, and negotiate with them, to be able to attend. This is a good example of “power to” access new learning opportunities.

Out of 46 respondents who attended bazaars 35 of them claimed that getting out of the community on behalf of their work gives them prestige in the family and allows them to be more vocal. However, there are also variations. Depending on how vocal one is the chances of being sent to represent the community are higher.

Some of the young women have been introduced to leadership and management skills. It is an additional resource, which allows the women to have enhanced “power from within”, and “power to”, which is then transformed into “power over” resources, accompanied with self-reliance and independent decision-making at work. This training is sometimes formal in the form of a course, but it is often done informally, where the women by trial and error are provided with guidance from the volunteers, through the monthly meetings, they have. This gives them a lot of respect at work and a good salary. Twelve respondents said that it contributed to their decision-making within the family. They have all exercised their agency to reach at leadership positions.

The young women have developed critical thinking to perceive social, political and economic contradictions. There is a constant “dialogue”, between the women and the volunteers/ administration and board members, in order to discuss not only the work at APE, but also issues that are of concern to the community and to see how to deal with these forces that oppress them (threats of eviction, the tradition of FGM, early marriage, women’s unfair burden). The “dialogue” also includes how to fight these threats. Literacy and pursuing of education has “ripple effects” on economic, social and cultural empowerment. Providing the women with additional respect and bargaining power. This is all part of the struggle to “free” the minds and to sharpen their self-awareness and expand their horizons. Not all have achieved that level, but those who have not yet, have the potential to.

The educational and training experiences have given the women the power to bargain for a better status with their family, neighborhood and community.

Sociologically, the analysis of the responses have revealed that the APE interventions have helped the workers at different levels, not only in enhancing their bargaining power in the household, but especially to know how to listen, dialogue, respect other people's opinion and contribute to decision making. When they practice those skills in the community, they gain the respect of both women and men. Culturally, the age of marriage, selection of partner, number and spacing of children and FGM are all decisions, which are taken within a social and cultural context, which can and has been challenged by the interventions of APE.

It is very interesting to note that 80% of my sample of 55 women, are circumcised. However, all 55 categorically refuse to perform this operation on their daughters and pledge to ensure that it is not repeated within their families. This “en masse” refusal to circumcise their daughters is largely due to the health awareness classes at APE. In this case, with regards to the forms of power involved in the decision to fight FGM, there is “power from within, where these women are motivated from within by their trauma not to subject their daughters to FGM. This form of power, encourages women to challenge patriarchal structures (including oppressive traditions such as FGM), through additional self-confidence assertiveness and the enhancement of independent decisions.

The “Power to” in the case of FGM, manifests itself in having access to better reproductive health and awareness. In the case of “power over”, this involves a woman’s capacity to defend herself against violence, and to be more aware of her capacities and rights, and to try to change negative aspects of her culture in her household and community. Knowledge about the practice is the resource used to discourage FGM. This is turned into agency, where most women try to advocate against the practice so as to spread the word in their families and in the neighborhood and community at large. The achievement is the fact that it is more acceptable, that women and girls are not circumcised than ever before. This also includes the “power with” because of potential for collective action.

5.4 Personal and community empowerment or transformation:

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the four dimensions of empowerment interact dynamically to produce a complex set of outcomes on the individual lives of

the women and their families. This signifies that these interactions lead directly to personal empowerment, which have a direct impact on the household level. The frame of mind of the young women has changed and expanded. APE, also attempts to have meetings with husbands, to discuss gender relations, in an attempt to bring about social change within households. Gender relations are being transformed in the households of the women at APE. They may not be revolutionized, but they are changing. Using Kabeer and Mayoux's terms, this signifies a qualified success in the arena of immediate (individual) level of empowerment and the intermediate (change in institutional rules). The question is, has that empowerment impact gone beyond that scope and into the realm of the entire community or even beyond that to the "deeper level", (i.e. structural relations, gender, class, caste)? My answer would be affirmative to a certain extent for the first part of the question, but far from being achieved for the second part.

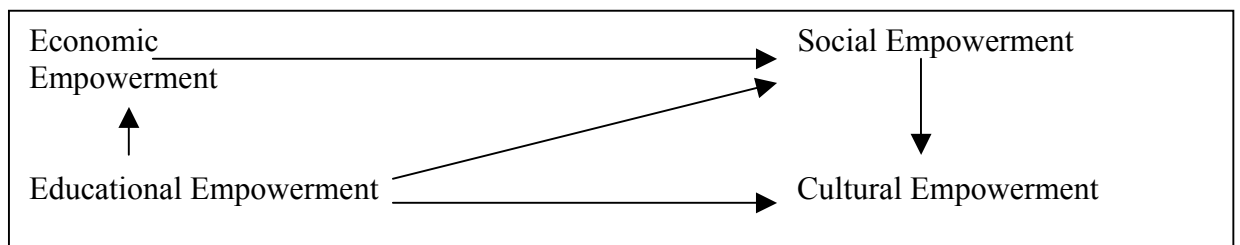
The fact that young women at APE, have individually become empowered, and gender relations in their households have improved or changed, this is in itself a model for others in the same neighborhood and community to be influenced by and to follow. The positive effect spreads in the neighborhood, especially that most of these girls are respected by their neighbors (49 of the sample state their work at APE is perceived with pride in the community), they then become agents of changes and models for others. Some of the women mentioned that their neighbors were so impressed by their work, that they are sending their daughters to APE to apply for work. The fact of combining employment creation with more, is an attractive package and has a strong impact in the community.

This is in addition, to the outreach activity of health care visits that some of the young women were trained for, to spread health awareness in the community (door-to-door). And on a more informal basis, all women mentioned that they are constantly preaching within their families and neighbors against FGM, early marriage, discrimination against girls and many other topics. 11 of the women in my sample mentioned that they made home health visits and 52 mentioned that they were vocal about expressing their opinion with regards to a harmful tradition or practice. This is already a strong impact on the community and there is potential for more in the future.

6. Conclusion: Empowerment as a Kaleidoscope

This paper has attempted to shed some light on the concept of Empowerment and its various approaches and dynamics. This is within a particular context of the *Zabbaleen* garbage collectors of Egypt, who suffer from the disempowering conditions of –social exclusion, stigmatization and vulnerability- as squatters. The women of the *Zabbaleen* community suffer from additional harsh conditions and vulnerabilities with regards to lack of mobility, constraints on fertility, sexuality and labor. APE provided a conducive environment in which these vulnerabilities can be diminished. The range of economic, educational and health interventions were vehicles for change, which contributed to the process of transformation within the women themselves and their families. The core of this thesis is on the dynamics of interaction between the different dimensions of empowerment.

Chapter 5 dealt with the field responses of a sample of young women working at APE, and how they perceive the impact APE's opportunities had on their lives and that of their families. Their responses *Substantiated* to a great extent the validity of Mayoux and Kabeer's definition of empowerment, their comprehensive approach and analytical paradigm as summarized in chapter 2, but also tried to go beyond it. And *Demonstrated* the impact of APE's *comprehensive*²¹ program where all the dimensions of empowerment economic, education and socio-cultural are tackled simultaneously as well as interactively through separate interventions. The field data has also demonstrated that APE's approach is *processual and dynamic*, with a great deal of interaction between the different components, as demonstrated on the diagram below:



As seen above, *economic empowerment* in and of itself, could translate into *social empowerment*, through increased social respectability and a stronger bargaining position than before. This stronger position would not only influence the life of a

woman in her family (parents or in-laws), on simple survival decisions, but would also impact her life long decisions such as selection of marriage partner, number and spacing of children, and whether or not to perform FGM on daughter or not. These denote *cultural empowerment*. In addition, to the contribution of economic empowerment to that stronger position for a woman, is the *educational empowerment*, which also contributes to a woman's social empowerment. *Educational empowerment* is inter-linked with all forms of empowerment, to the economic through the increase in transferable skills, allowing enhanced economic earnings; to the *socio-cultural empowerment*, in assisting women in making more informed decisions based on exposure to health classes. All of these merge into what I would call the "*personal/ individual empowerment of the young women*", which in turn will have a circular effect with regards to the whole process of empowerment. The more personally empowered an individual becomes, the stronger she/he will pursue other dimensions of empowerment.

Thus, the next step was to assess whether or not the personal/ individual empowerment has been translated to a wider circle. The evidence demonstrated by my data, affirm having reached the immediate and intermediate levels of empowerment and the translation of individual empowerment to a certain extent into the wider community. The deeper level has not been reached.

From the dynamics presented above, all three of my research questions have been answered. On the whole, resources and agency of the young women have been enhanced. Women now have a much stronger fall back position. And all four forms of power have been enhanced. But especially, "power from within", and "power to" they now have increased access to resources and information. "Power over" has been demonstrated in several cases. But "power with" was only shown in one incident, which was a collective action against FGM. The women working at APE have already become agents of change within APE, their households, neighborhood and community.

The literature surveyed provided me with the "springing board" for the analysis of my field data. However, in order to grasp the fluidity and complexity of the dynamics between the dimensions, I had to stretch the boundaries of theory to adapt it to the

²¹ Comprehensive: Also indicating, holistic.

context of my data. I agree with Kabeer's framework on resources, agency and achievements and Mayoux's framework on power. However, my data indicated that there are interactive dynamics between the different dimensions of empowerment, which contribute to the advancement of the understanding of this concept. I found that the comprehensive approach is the optimal approach. Empowerment leads to certain dynamics, which are *non-linear, in which the* effect of a certain dynamic is not direct between dimensions (A to B). There is a grid of connections between them, which could be circular or mutually reinforcing. This process of interaction is also *continuous and ever changing*. The young women are not only influenced with the dimensions of empowerment and their interaction, while they are at APE, this interactive dynamics continues to affect and impact them throughout their lives. In addition, it is a process of *interaction between overt and covert dynamics , Subtle and visible* interactions, between different dimensions and within the household, workplace and community. Finally, empowerment is "*avant tout*" (*begins as*) an individual experience, which is reflected into a family environment. In order for women's empowerment to thrive, it must be manifested in an amenable environment to allow it to continue flourishing. This is where the title of the paper was inspired, "Empowerment as a Kaleidoscope". Empowerment is understood and experienced differently by different people, in an ever-changing pattern, like looking through a Kaleidoscope.

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