



RESEARCH  
PROGRAM ON  
Water, Land and  
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# Linking Women's Empowerment and their Resilience

Literature review

Author: Stephanie Leder  
Post-doctoral Fellow for Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE)  
International Water Management Institute – Nepal

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



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Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters  
(BRACED) Programme

**Anukulan:** Developing Climate Resilient Livelihoods for local communities through public-private partnership for 500,000 poor people in western Nepal that suffer from climate extremes and disasters



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## Summary

This literature review explores different conceptualizations of empowerment and possible links to resilience within gender and development studies. It takes theoretical perspectives of power and empowerment into account, reviews dimensions and relations influencing women's agency, and critically reflects on approaches for quantifying empowerment. Based on conceptualizations of empowerment ranging from narrow and instrumentalist to complex ones that engage with structural and social change, interpretations have diverse and reciprocal impacts on methodological considerations and the nature of empirical evidence. Furthermore, these diverse conceptualizations are used to evaluate and inform developmental policies and projects to varying degrees.

This literature review facilitates a multidimensional, relational and processual understanding of women's empowerment and their resilience. Based on the definition of Kabeer (1999: 346), empowerment is "the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability". Kabeer's (1999) theoretical underpinning of empowerment as the ability to make first order decisions that result in *desired* outcomes incorporates three interrelated dimensions: *resources*, *agency* and *achievements*. Rowland (1998) distinguishes between power at a personal and community level, as well as with close relations using three different categories: *power within*, *power with* and *power to*. Lukes' (1974) three-dimensional view of power gives insights into the extent that studies, frameworks and indices engage with structural forms of power. His perspective highlights that measuring engagement in decision-making is a behavioural analysis and does not examine covert conflicts (for example whether grievances are aired or power is exercised to such an extent that perceptions are manipulated). Building on the concept of "critical consciousness" of Freire (1996), the awareness of alternatives to gendered cultural norms, communication processes and knowledge transfer can strengthen the concept of power towards empowerment. This highlights the relevance of understanding socio-culturally embedded roots of gendered relations.

These conceptualizations of empowerment contrast operationalizations of empowerment in the form of measuring decision-making (Alkire et al. 2013) and the presence, use and effectiveness of choice (Longwe 1995), as these represent an individualized and situational perspective of empowerment. Qualitative studies of Rao (2014), Zwartveen & Neupane (1996), Joshi (2014) and Guerin et al. (2013) debunk certain assumptions, e.g. that economic empowerment will lead to overall empowerment or that the participation in decision-making processes will empower women. These studies provide a more nuanced understanding of factors influencing and mediating empowerment. Such an understanding is further related to other concepts in gender and development research, such as Kandiyoti's (1988) "patriarchal bargains" and Sen's (2014) "cooperative conflicts".

Empowerment needs to be viewed as a highly contextualized, multi-dimensional process of which women themselves have differing perspectives. Hence, it is important to understand subjectivities and the respective influencing factors in specific contexts, as well as how they interlink. Approaches to understanding empowerment as a relational and processual concept take social structures and agency into account. The link to resilience sheds light on how project interventions and policies can target particular dimensions of empowerment to foster coping, adaptation and transformative capacities so women can effectively participate in decision-making processes, which translate into resilience.

## 1. Introduction

Empowerment is a term widely used by academics, policy makers and development workers, which has made the term vague and contested in conceptualization and methodology. Despite its multiple, and partially complex interpretations and what Sharp et al. (2003) call a “fluidity in meaning”, the link of empowerment to other concepts relevant to gender and development studies, such as resilience, remains unexplored. This literature review seeks to understand the concept and possible links to resilience in the context of the feminization of agriculture and male out-migration in Nepal. The guiding research question for this literature review is:

How does women’s empowerment link to resilience to climate related shocks and stresses?

To analyze possible links of empowerment and resilience in a changing agricultural sector in Nepal, it is necessary to understand both concepts and their methodological considerations and empirical evidence in the wider academic literature. For this purpose, this literature review takes theoretical perspectives on power and empowerment, particularly by Lukes (1974), Rowland (1998) and Kabeer (1999) into account and reviews approaches of quantifying empowerment, e.g. the WEAI by Alkire et al. (2013), and studies uncovering the factors and relations influencing women’s agency and related conceptualizations of empowerment. A review of these studies will facilitate a multidimensional, relational and processual understanding of the possible influence of women’s empowerment on resilience. Further, this literature review provides the grounding for an empirical study for the BRACED project, “Anukulan,” which will analyze the interlinkages between women’s empowerment and resilience to climate related shocks and stresses in two case studies in the West and Far West of Nepal.

## 2. The origin of the term *empowerment*

The term, or philosophy, of empowerment did not initially develop in a gender context, but through the Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire (1921-1997). He developed the “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1970) to empower the poor, the “oppressed”, to resolve the contradiction to the “oppressors”, those in power. Freire’s approach led to an influential social and educational movement and literacy program to create empowerment through critical consciousness, “*la conscientização*” (Freire, 1996: 17). Later he was named the founder of *critical pedagogy*, which views the role of education as promoting capabilities for individual development from a human rights perspective. The central objective of critical pedagogy is both the individual liberation to become a transformative democratic citizen, and the collective struggle of creating social transformation towards social justice in an egalitarian society. Through this educational awakening, the “oppressed” become aware of the mechanisms of their social oppression and can liberate themselves from manipulation.

This educational and radical perspective of empowerment changed when it entered the wider development - as well as the gender and development (GAD) - discourse in the 1980s. In contrast to the Women in Development (WID) approach of the 1970s, which aimed at the *inclusion* of women in development projects and discourse, GAD looked into power dynamics in gender *relations* and social norms in particular contexts, and thus conducted a more in-depth analysis of underlying structural causes of women’s subordination. Broader associations of the term are the capability approach (Sen, 1992), and the typology of participation (Agarwal, 2001). Others are sectoral approaches, such as social, political and economic empowerment (Luttrell et al., 2009). Cornwall and White (2000) addressed the lack of men and masculinity in the GAD debate and opened the discussion in an IDS Bulletin edition on “bringing men in” by pointing out that they can also be marginalized, powerless and dependent on women’s love and respect. Research on masculinity examines how men perform within a culture or a set of institutions that reward and value masculine traits.

The definitions of empowerment vary from narrow and simple, to broad and complex: they can be placed on a continuum of instrumentalist development project targets and wider structural and social

change envisioned by feminist political ecologists. Particularly development agencies who use economic interventions as a means of achieving empowerment have been accused of using the term as buzz word for neo-liberal policies (Batiwala, 2007). The term is also often criticized for being used to represent a predictive, static outcome, rather than a process (e.g. Kabeer 1999). To shed light on the different facets of empowerment, it is useful to review the conceptualizations of power.

### 3. Conceptualizing power – a three-dimensional perspective on power

To understand the underlying perspective on power and the form of conflict in gender and empowerment literature, a review of the three-dimensional model of power by Lukes (1974) is a useful categorical conceptualization of power (cf. Table 1). Lukes (1974) changed the notion from *community power* towards power as a structural phenomenon by differentiating *three dimensions of power*. The one-dimensional view was developed primarily by Dahl (1961), who discusses overt conflicts based on a *pluralistic* society in which interests can be bargained for and thus the powerful and powerless are defined by their success or failure in making decisions over the interests of others within a community. This perspective is what has been used in the “Women in Development” (WID) discourse since the 1970s, and has been prevalent in many studies on women’s empowerment. This one-dimensional view of power is limited to a behavioral study of direct, actual and observable conflicts between actors with different interests, but “inevitably takes over the bias of the political system under observation and is blind to the ways in which its political agenda is controlled” (Lukes, 1974, p. 262).

The “two faces of power” as described by Bachrach and Baratz (1962) highlight boundaries to political decision-making, as not all interests are engaged. Barriers to participation exist due to reinforced social and political values and institutional practices. This two-dimensional perspective examines *how* control over the political agenda is practiced and *how* potential issues are kept out of political processes. The interests of the powerful are promoted, while it is anticipated that the powerless show covertly sub-political *grievances*. This assumption is, however, challenged by empirical studies, e.g. by Zwarteveen and Neupane (1996), who brought evidence that non-participation in decision-making processes can actually give women a covertly powerful position in relation to their access to water resources (cf. chapter 4).

The three-dimensional view of power, as developed by Lukes (1974), extends this perspective by assuming that the powerful defend the status quo so pervasively that the powerless are unconscious of potential challenges and alternatives to the political process. Their perceptions are manipulated through values and institutional processes, and reinforced through communication processes and information transfer, in the form of social myths, symbols and language. This is what Bourdieu (1977) calls the *doxa*, in which particular practices and relations are not questioned or even experienced as unequal. Practices such as beating, purdah or eating last in the family can remain uncontested, since they align to cultural definitions of a good mother or wife. To uncover the latent conflict in this three-dimensional perspective of power requires a socio-cultural in-depth analysis of behavioral patterns of groups and institutions.

This sociological perspective is widened by Foucault, as his concept of power applies to “all fields of the social sciences and the humanities” (Sadan, 2004, p. 37). He does not locate power within organizations or agents, but assumes instead that subjects are discursively *constituted* through power. Instead of defining power as “a finite entity that can be located” (Rowlands 1998: 13), Foucault (1982) models power *relations* in terms of knowledge and language which shape institutions and every-day practices in the form of social networks, with resistance as the necessary antagonist to power. Hence, Foucault views power from a post-structuralist perspective.

Type of power	One-dimensional view of power	Two-dimensional view of power	Three-dimensional view of power
<b>Conflict</b>	Overt conflict	Covert conflict	Latent conflict
<b>(Non-) Participation in Decision-making</b>	Open conflict in decision-making, assuming a <i>pluralistic</i> society, in which all the community's interests are represented by means of open processes	Non-participation in decision-making, mobilization of bias that reinforces and emphasizes values, beliefs, ceremonies and institutional procedures	Influence on consciousness and perception by the ability to implant interests in people's minds that are contrary to their own good
<b>Awareness of the powerless</b>	Powerless are conscious and openly display their opinions, however do not have influence	Powerless are conscious, but prevented to participate in decision-making	Powerless are unconscious as their perceptions are manipulated
<b>Method to study</b>	Behavioral analysis of decision-making	Observation of grievances, studying the mechanisms how the powerful prevent participation in decision-making as well as the exclusion of particular topics	Analysis of social and historical factors, use of social myths, language and symbols, study of communication processes and information transfer
<b>Authors</b>	Dahl (1961)	Bachrach and Baratz (1962)	Lukes (1974)  Gaventa (1980)

Table 1: Three dimensions on power based on Lukes (1974) and as reviewed in Sadan (2004)

The three-dimensional model of power by Lukes (1974) highlights that the third dimension of power is rarely addressed in women's empowerment studies because it is a complex endeavor to examine underlying social and cultural structures in gender relations. Most studies reviewed examine either an overt conflict by analyzing who is making decisions, particularly when it comes to measuring empowerment (e.g. through the WEAI [cf. chapter 5]), or a covert conflict, in which women are conscious of their exclusion from decision-making, but also have their means in benefitting from their non-participation (e.g. the study by Zwartveen and Neupane (1996, cf. chapter 4). Before empirical studies on women's empowerment are reviewed, conceptualizations of empowerment are depicted in the following chapter.

## 4. Conceptualizing empowerment – a relational and processual perspective

Kabeer (1999) and Rowlands (1998) analyze empowerment from relational and time and scale perspectives, respectively. Kabeer (1999: 436) defines empowerment as “the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability”. She conceptualizes empowerment as a *process* of change from disempowerment to empowerment by expanding people’s ability to make first order decisions that result in *desired* outcomes. The ability to make strategic choices incorporates three interrelated dimensions: *agency*, *resources* and *achievements*. The ability to define one’s goals and act upon them determines someone’s *agency*. However, this choice is only possible if alternative options exist, which enables the “emergence of a critical consciousness, the process by which people move from a position of unquestioning acceptance of the social order to a critical perspective on it” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 440 ). The idea of a critical perspective links to Freire (1996) and his writing on the importance of the critical consciousness to overcome oppression. A pre-condition to exercise choice is the access to and control over material, human and social *resources*. As a further dimension, the *achievements* of choice must be understood in terms of well-being outcomes (e.g. nourishment, health, shelter) as this sheds light on the equality of, and not differences in, choices. The interrelation of these three dimensions models the process of how resources translate into the realization of choice as well as its impact. However, Kabeer (1999) does not provide a concrete operationalization of these three dimensions.

In an attempt to uncover the meaning of empowerment, as it is used in the discourse and practice of development, Rowlands (1998), and also Charmes and Wieringa (2003), distinguish between different *modes of power visibility*, linked to the three dimensions of power by Lukes (1974). The “power to” is a generative or productive power, as in the one-dimensional perspective of power (Lukes, 1974), which addresses the exercising of power over the interests of others through force or rebellion. “Power over” refers to being able to control actions and resources to suppress certain conflicts from being discussed. This is related to the second dimension described by Lukes (1974), referring to a power within certain biases. In this scenario, to become empowered means to move from non-participation in decision-making to participation by making previously concealed grievances a subject within the economic and political structures of society. “Power within” refers to enabling personal qualities of self-acceptance, self-respect or spiritual strength (Rowlands 1998: 14). “Power with” relates to collective power that can be greater than individual power<sup>1</sup>. Charmes and Wieringa (2003) also differentiate between the *mode of operation* of power (oppressive, challenging, creative), and the *mode of appearance* (in speech acts/texts, institutions and daily practices).

Based on the analysis of a women’s educational program in Honduras from an empowerment perspective, Rowlands (1998: 23) constructs a model of empowerment in different spaces of women’s lives by differentiating between *personal* and *collective* power. Rowlands also looks at the power of *close relationships*, particularly with husbands and immediate family members, as product of empowerment processes. The *Women’s Empowerment Matrix* by Wieringa (1994) also includes the state, regional and global level and looks at the interconnections of each level with physical, socio-cultural, religious, political, legal and economic spheres. The relational view of Rowlands (1998) takes different scales of agency into account and may gain value when linked to Kabeer’s (1999) processual perspective (Fig. 1). The scale arrow extends from the individual to the household to the community level, while the time arrow demonstrates the sequence of investigating empowerment. Resources are seen as a pre-condition to agency, and achievements are the well-being outcome. This process can also be seen as cyclic, as well-being outcomes influence resources as well as agency.

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<sup>1</sup> For operational implications of these types of power relations from an agency and structural perspective of empowerment, cf. Fig. 11 in the appendix; for examples of outcomes on assets (capabilities) of different definitions of power on a variety of scales, cf. Fig. 12 in the appendix.

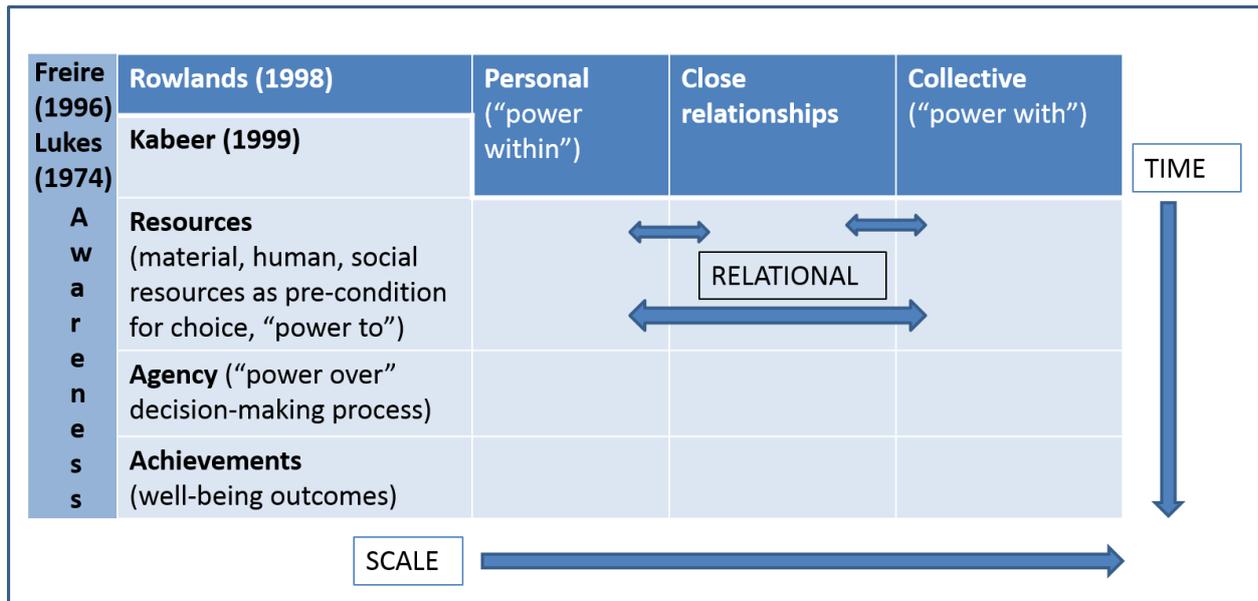


Fig. 1: Relational, time, scale and awareness dimensions of empowerment

Charmes and Wieringa (2003) conceptualize women's empowerment in a similar way to Kabeer; they view empowerment as a progression from awareness to agency that depends on resources, education, political conditions and subjective factors, which influence the existence and consciousness of choice.

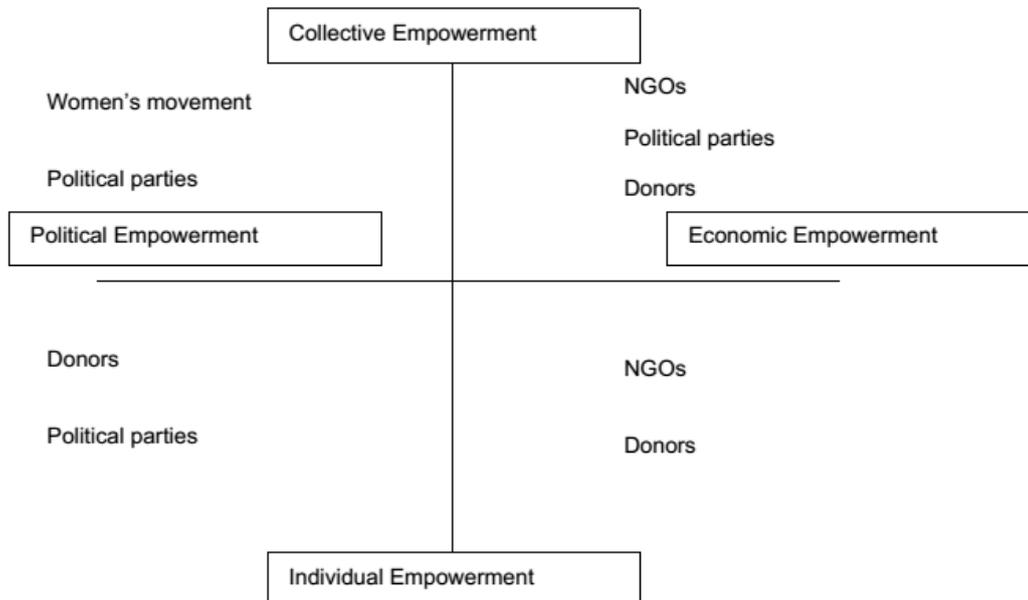
I suggest conceptualizing awareness through *critical consciousness*, a term coined by Freire (1996). A critical consciousness is an important pre-condition to empowerment, in addition to resources and agency. A critical consciousness of gendered relations and practices that exist due to cultural norms, communication processes and knowledge transfer is necessary to understand the socio-culturally embedded roots of unbalanced power relations. Freire's perspective is, as Dahl's, an overt form of power as he "makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation" (Freire, 1996: 30). He suggests that, instead of becoming integrated with and conforming to the present system, the "oppressed" are prepared to work towards their liberation from oppression. His radical perspective highlights the importance of dialogue with authentic words of reflection and action in order to be freed from a culture of silence (Freire, 1996 : 12).

Freire's idea of a critical consciousness can be developed further by integrating the second and third dimensions of power, resulting in a change in focus from raising critical awareness of the agents of power to an awareness of the *instruments and mechanisms of power*, as well as identifying how gendered practices within a particular cultural context are reproduced. This post-structural perspective of dispersed power helps to overcome Freire's binary view of the oppressors and the oppressed, which often translates into an essentialist perspective of men as the oppressors and women as the oppressed. Instead, power can be examined as a process that discursively constitutes agents both in powerful and powerless positions. This conceptualization helps to integrate awareness as the third dimension defined by Lukes (1974) in the conceptualization of Kabeer and Rowland.

Zwarteveen and Neupane (1996) challenge the second dimension defined by Lukes (1974), as they demonstrate that non-participation in decision-making processes does not necessarily mean that those excluded are disempowered. Their gender analysis of the Chhattis Mauja scheme in Nepal empirically shows that women, despite being excluded from the management of the scheme's organization,

“succeed extremely well in getting their irrigation needs accommodated” (Zwarteveen & Neupane, 1996: v). They are “free-riders,” as they take more water than they are entitled to and contribute less to maintenance work since they are not obeying the rules as non-members. This study shows that women’s exclusion from decision-making processes allows them to use the prevailing gender perceptions of women as physically weak and in need of social protection to develop a privileged position for getting water. These processes of manipulation, deception and negotiation of power relations is what Kabeer (1999: 447) points out as relevant in her definition for agency. Further, Zwarteveen and Neupane’s study depicts farming as a “collective endeavor” (1996: 1), rather than as an individual livelihood activity. Women turn the prevailing gender ideology in favor of their own effectiveness, and directly ask the village irrigation leader rather than spending time participating in meetings (Zwarteveen & Neupane, 1996: 16). Since this study highlights the extent of women’s agency despite – or rather because of – gender ideologies, it is not enough to identify empowerment by counting who makes more decision, or to examine the issue by asking questions like “who during the last growing season generally made the decisions about what inputs to use on land?” (E12, WEAI). Instead, the study shows how power cannot be reduced to the participation in decision-making, since women know how to manipulate access to water to their favor. As a contextual in-depth understanding in this case study revealed, the assumption that women need to be included in decision-making processes to receive their share of resources is not necessarily true as women are able to subvert gender ideologies to their own advantage. This study sheds light on covered forms of empowerment, which need to be considered closely when examining agency.

Nazneen et al. (2011) depict how the term empowerment evolved in Bangladesh from the initially instrumentalized logic of international donors to a more nuanced understanding with multiple discourses on divergent meanings. They have concluded in their review of documents by NGOs, political parties, women’s groups and donors in Bangladesh that empowerment is seen mostly as an individual, and not a collective or institutionalized, mechanism, focused on material means, rather than greater structural change. The authors visualized this in a double continuum of empowerment from individual to collective and from economic to political empowerment (Fig. 2). Sultan (2015) has researched women’s perception of empowerment in Bangladesh and concluded with the need to “move beyond seeing women as victims or heroines, and engage with their everyday realities... to do more than give individual women economic opportunities... to tackle deeper-rooted structural constraints that perpetuate inequalities.”



*Fig. 2: Double continuum of women's empowerment (Nazneen et al. 2011: 32)*

Many conceptualizations of empowerment for development projects exist but here, we present one from Longwe (1995). Longwe's framework includes five levels of women's empowerment: welfare, access, conscientization and awareness raising, participation and mobilization, and control (Fig. 3). These are in hierarchical order and serve to analyze projects' objectives from a women's empowerment perspective. For the purpose of a gender analyses through practitioners, the five levels are listed and checked off if project objectives meet these aspects of empowerment. The framework suggests that these levels of empowerment follow a linear process and that women are a homogenous group throughout these levels, while men and institutions involved are excluded from the framework. Hence specific factors that make empowerment as processual and relational concept are not included in the framework and may lead to a decontextualized perspective on women's empowerment.

LEVELS OF EMPOWERMENT	DESCRIPTION
<p>CONTROL</p> <p>↑</p>	<p>Women and men have equal control over factors of production and distribution of benefits, without dominance or subordination.</p>
<p>PARTICIPATION</p> <p>↑</p>	<p>Women have equal participation in decision-making in all programs and policies.</p>
<p>CONSCIENTIZATION</p> <p>↑</p>	<p>Women believe that gender roles can be changed and gender equality is possible.</p>
<p>ACCESS</p> <p>↑</p>	<p>Women gain access to resources such as land, labor, credit, training, marketing facilities, public services, and benefits on an equal basis with men. Reforms of law and practice may be prerequisites for such access.</p>
<p>WELFARE</p>	<p>Women's material needs, such as food, income, and medical care, are met.</p>

Fig. 3: The Women's Empowerment Framework by Longwe (1995)

## 5. Measuring empowerment

To measure and monitor empowerment processes and outcomes, several frameworks and indices have been developed, which can be used to influence policy. The *Gender-related Development Index* (GDI) looks at the gender disparity of the Human Development Index (HDI), which compares the average level of income (oriented on the GDP per capita), education (literacy and gross enrolment), and life expectancy, globally. One of the major critiques is that the GDI highly correlates with GDP, which in itself does not include agricultural and informal wages as well as subsistence, reproductive and care activities, in which women are particularly involved (for further critique, cf. Charmes and Wieringa (2003)).

The *Gender Empowerment Measure* (GEM) compares three indicators globally: female seats in parliament, managerial positions in the administrative and professional sectors, and income. As in the GDI, the GEM is based on secondary data, which lead to a number of problems on the reliability and validity of these indicators. Most importantly, it is worthwhile to reflect on the limited conceptualization of women's empowerment in these indices, as they exclude, for example, women's rights and opportunities of choice, as well as cultural and religious factors.

Examples of tools that use more detailed indices and are based on primary data analysis include the "Measuring Empowerment Framework" by Alsop and Heinsohn (2005), the Concept of "Measurement of Women's Empowerment in Rural Bangladesh" by Mahmud et al. (2012) and the "Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index" (WEAI) by Alkire et al. (2013).

The first is based on Sen's *capability approach* (1999) where quality of life is based on what people "have reason to value." Its authors define empowerment as "a person's capacity to make *effective* choices; that is, as the capacity to transform choices into desired actions and outcomes" (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005, p. 6). The indicators they use are *asset endowments* for personal agency, the capacity to make purposive choice (psychological, informational, organizational, material, social,

financial, or human), and *opportunity structure* for institutional context. This last indicator includes the presence and operation of formal and informal institutions, including laws, regulatory frameworks, and norms governing behavior. Agency and opportunity structure are evaluated in the domains of the state, the market and society<sup>2</sup>. The authors hypothesize that the degree of empowerment measured by the *existence, use* and *achievement* of choice influences development outcomes (visualized as three arrows in Fig. 4). The strength of this framework is that it considers both individual decision-making capacities and opportunities at local, intermediary and global scales and in different domains. However, the separation of agency and structure contradicts theoretical debates of sociologists, such as Giddens (1984) who developed the *structuration theory*. This theory argues for the duality of structure in which agents and structure have an equal ontological status and are both medium and outcome of social action. Nevertheless, this framework differentiates multiple dimensions and can be used to give evidence for factors which facilitate or inhibit decision-making in any sector.

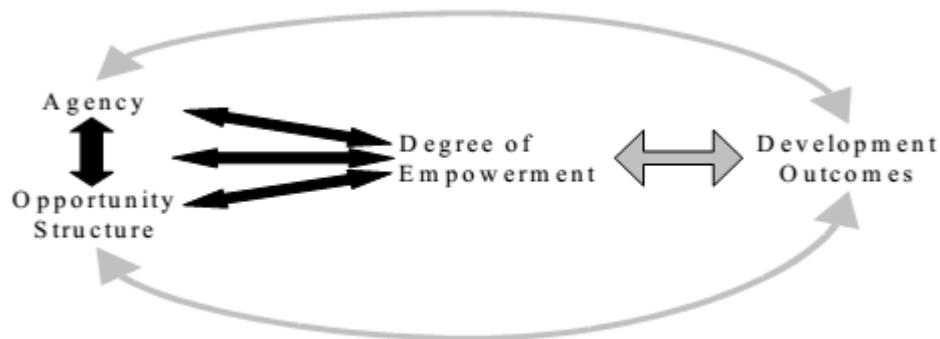


Fig. 4: The relationship between outcomes and correlates of empowerment (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005)

Mahmud et al. (2012) conceptualize empowerment as a dynamic, multi-dimensional process that is strongly influenced by resources and settings, measured by the four determinants: age (demographic status); household wealth (economic status); women's schooling (social status); and media exposure to TV or radio. These result in four dimensions of empowerment: self-esteem; control of resources; decision-making; and mobility (although not simultaneously). The authors note that empowerment processes are not directly observable, but that indicators or proxies can be used, which need to be relevant to the particular context. In rural Bangladesh, the authors conducted a study with 3,500 women in 128 villages. They found that women are most likely to feel empowered when they have a say in decisions and one of the two self-esteem indicators are present (women's perception of the number of areas in which they should have a say and whether beating is justified in different occasions). Interestingly, at the same time, women may feel less empowered because of limited access to cash ("control of resources"), and least likely to be empowered with respect to their limited freedom of mobility.

<sup>2</sup> for a detailed table of the "Measuring Empowerment Framework", see Fig. 8 in the appendix

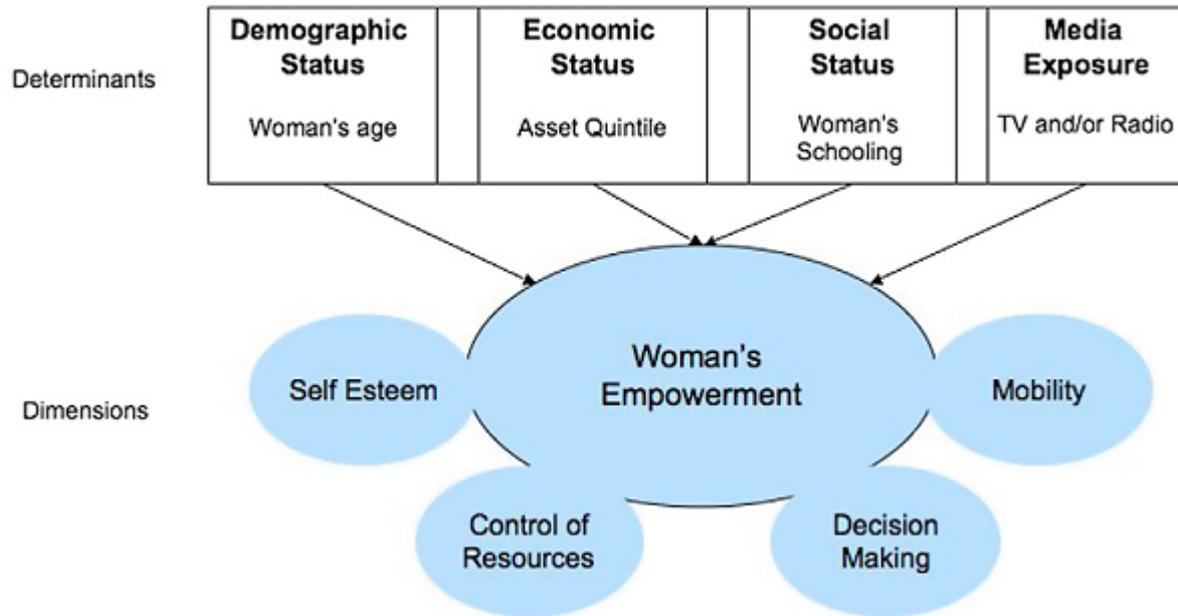


Fig. 5: Determinants and dimensions to measure women's empowerment in rural Bangladesh by Mahmud et al. (2012)

Recognizing the lack of measurements and quantifications of empowerment in agriculture, Alkire et al. (2013) developed the “Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index” (WEAI). To quantify women’s inclusion in the agricultural sector, the index measures five domains of women’s empowerment relative to men: (1) decisions about agricultural production; (2) access to and decision-making power about productive resources; (3) control of use of income; (4) leadership in the community; and (5) time allocation (Fig. 5). The WEAI questionnaire weighs answers on ten indicators according to the “adequate autonomy” (Alkire et al., 2013: 74) of women and produces a relative score which shows women’s participation in decision-making. If a woman reaches “adequacy” in 80% or more of the weighted indicators, she is empowered. Although the authors claim to measure “agency”, as defined by Kabeer (1999), this score provides a situational and static quantification of empowerment from an economic perspective that overshadows complex power relations within a particular context. Kabeer’s argument that agency needs to be analyzed as a process and in its relation to resources and achievements is not considered in the WEAI. Particularly, social and human resources can play a great role in creating agency and may lead to different forms of empowerment that cannot be grasped simply by scoring decision-making based on resources, production, income or representation in community groups. For example, not working or contributing to the household economically can be a choice and does not necessarily demonstrate disempowerment. Quantitative assessments on how time is spent (WEAI domain 5) could therefore be easily misinterpreted. Cornwall (2007) addresses empowerment and choice in the context of uncovering “gender myths”:

*“Seeing poor women as individuals who pursue entirely independent and goal-oriented strategies, as is often the case in discourses on ‘empowerment’ and ‘choice’ in development, is to deny the complexities of their relational ties and the contingencies of lived experience.” (A. Cornwall, 2007, p. 158)*

The WEAI labels women as either ‘disempowered’ or ‘empowered’, which can lead to their depiction as “victims” or “heroes”. Furthermore, women who are the heads of households have scores that would indicate that they are ‘empowered’ because they make all of the household decisions; however, they may have limited choices and feel strongly overburdened in their role as sole decision-makers. Nevertheless, a simplified score may prove helpful in raising awareness of women’s empowerment in

the development discourse. To understand the cases in their respective contexts, however, in-depth gender analyses are necessary.

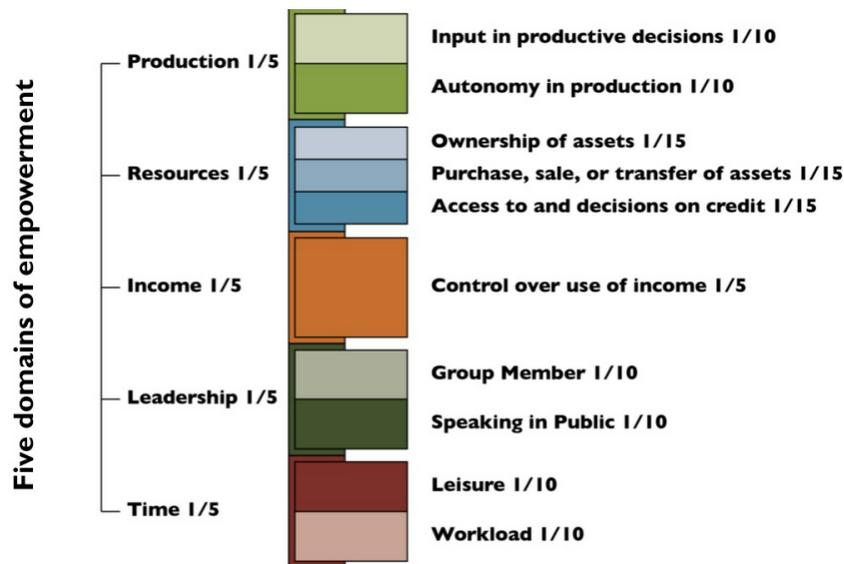


Fig. 5: Five domains of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI presentation by IFPRI 2014, based on Alkire et al. (2013))

## 6. Factors influencing and mediating empowerment

Trommlerová et al. (2015) provide an overview of and add to studies on correlates and variables of empowerment. With household-level information and advanced econometric techniques, the authors identify determinants of empowerment for a capability-based poverty approach. Their study measures the correlation between a number of factors with individuals' self-reported ability to induce changes in their lives at both communal and individual levels. Their statistical findings suggest that age, gender, marital status, nationality, economic activity, health, self-reported capabilities and communal empowerment determines empowerment at both levels, suggesting that these findings may help to develop targeted policies towards gender, age and other social divides. However, quantitative approaches like this one miss the relational and processual perspectives that in-depth qualitative studies can provide. In the following, three studies will be discussed to show the relevance of qualitative studies and how particular assumptions can be debunked.

One is a study by Rao (2014), which challenges the assumption that economic empowerment will lead to overall greater agency. Rao (2014) has shown that workforce participation is hardly the determining factor of women's agency and well-being. She conducted a household survey and in-depth interviews in rural Tamil Nadu, which provided evidence that the nature and social valuation of women's work influences women's agency. Other factors were also identified as important influences, such as age and stage in life cycle (e.g. own and children's marital status), reproductive success (especially by the birth of a boy), and caste and economic status. Women's reproductive work (birth, educational status, and marital status of a son) can have a strong impact on agency. For example, the social position of a young wife changes if she gives birth to a son by "gaining recognition... maintaining an image as a good woman, wife, and mother" (Rao 2014: 11). This can lead to greater agency within the family on issues of education and health care of their children. Because masculine and feminine identities are constructed through different values, "men face social pressures to earn and provide, women face pressures to reproduce – in particular, to produce sons" (Rao 2014: 12). Although this study was not conducted in the agricultural sector, it highlights the separate spheres of productive and reproductive

space, in which decision-making is relevant. Lundberg and Pollak (1993) also identify these separate spheres in a bargaining model used in marriages (Kandiyoti, 1988) which includes a non-cooperative equilibrium that reflects traditional gender roles. This understanding may be differently important in the agricultural context, where the productive and reproductive spheres are not as separated. For example, involvement in agriculture, depending on the type of work and access to land, can contribute to family nutrition. In the agricultural sector where productive and reproductive spheres are closely interlinked, questions from the WEAI on agricultural resources and production may overlook the importance of women's ability to make strategic choices about child care, nutrition and household management. The type of work being done also influences the perception of it as drudgery or work burden, even if there is an increase in self-worth which results from contributing to the family's income (Rao 2014: 4). Particularly in the South Asian context, the interaction of multiple factors influencing women's agency needs to be taken into account when analyzing women's empowerment. These factors include the educational status and land ownership, the influence of which can be ambiguous and needs to be considered in particular contexts. Guérin et al. (2013, p. 76) stress the importance of women's relationships with one another when analyzing the impact of microcredits on women's empowerment in Tamil Nadu, India, since "even where there is solidarity between women, women having agency require or imply domination over other women".

Another assumption is that the inclusion of women in politics leads to better political outcomes. Joshi (2014), based on a study of water inequalities in Darjeeling, states that women in positions of power are as affected as men by political coercion structured by gender, class, ethnicity and other social divides, which influence context-specific cultural norms. Women experience a structural and symbolic relation with environmental resources derived from a "universal patriarchy" (Molyneux 2001), but this relationship is crosscut by ethnicity class, color, race, and religion and evolves spatially and temporarily, leading to varying experiences. "Individual needs and priorities take precedence in the lives of women in political positions" (Joshi, 2014, p. 252), leading them to be unable or unwilling to address the complexity of water injustices in politics and in terms of a water crisis. Joshi (2014) outlines challenges to a politics of solidarity among diverse groups of women with differing needs, challenges, and individual priorities. She argues that simplifying complex realities depoliticizes social hierarchies and inequalities (p. 253). Her study demonstrates how politics, ethnicity, class, and religion interfere with an expected solidarity amongst women. She argues for viewing gender as relational identity, and not as social difference, as for example in the Harvard Framework (cf. Okali, 2011). This means that a homogeneous perspective on women, when talking about women's empowerment, may exclude marginalized women (e.g. Dalits) and may not lead to the change expected. Joshi's study challenges empowerment as a neutral concept addressing practical interventions and argue for analyzing, understanding and including structural and political issues that obstruct empowerment.

Only a few studies have considered women's perspectives and understandings of empowerment. The earlier mentioned study of Guérin et al. (2013) points out that women are "not necessarily looking for autonomy and independence from men, but rather for respect within their own community" (also see Basu, 1995; Kabeer, 2001; Cornwall, 2007; Ciotti, 2009). During their empirical study on microfinance in Tamil Nadu, they found that many women did not initially understand the term empowerment, but when they had it explained to them, defined it in their own words as the ability "to solve problems" and "to manage suffering" (Guérin et al., 2013, p. 80). Some related empowerment to material constrains, while others related it to the freedom of mobility and being respected by their family. This study shows that women perceive their empowerment, not as emancipation from male domination, but in relation to other women, their husbands, families and communities.

## 7. Patriarchal bargains and cooperative conflicts

An important consideration in decision-making is the negotiation, and possible manipulation, of power relations and *patriarchal bargains*. Patriarchal bargains describe how “women strategize within a set of constraints... to maximize security and optimize life options with varying potential for active or passive resistance in the face of oppression” (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 274). Kandiyoti (1988) describes a continuum of cooperation within households. For the less cooperative household, she uses the example of a relatively autonomous mother-child unit in a polygamous society in Sub-Saharan Africa; for the more cooperative, she uses male-headed families in South Asia, marked by subservience and manipulation. In the former example, women openly resist patriarchy, while in the latter “classic patriarchy” (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 278), women accommodate the internal logic of the patriarchal system. The conceptualization of these bargains offers a systemic perspective by which to analyze women’s agency within the power relations of patriarchy. Sharp et al. (2003) provide an interesting example with an empirical analysis of Bedouin women in Southern Egypt. They analyze gender relations and find that women prefer subordination to empowerment, since they experience greater advantages by not challenging the established order. To understand these differing realities is what Bourdieu (1977) calls “doxa”, the traditions and culture beyond discourse and argumentation which “have become naturalized” (in Kabeer, 1999, p. 441).

Sen (1990) views gender relations at the intra-household level as *cooperative conflicts*, since both *cooperation* (adding to total availabilities) and *conflict* (dividing the total availabilities among the members of the household) are simultaneously involved. He includes in his cooperative-conflicts model objective and *perceived* personal welfare, levels of contribution, and a breakdown of positions as influencing bargaining outcomes. Perception may also have an impact on bargaining outcomes. For example, the absence of protest against and questioning of inequality is no evidence of the absence of inequality; in this case, there is a danger of legitimizing an unequal order (Sen 1990: 126). Similarly, Freire (1996) has argued for the need to develop a critical consciousness in order to break the silence on injustice.

Jackson (2013) criticizes Sen’s model for assuming lower self-perceptions of personal welfare among women and for emphasizing the role of cash contributions to the household as the basis of bargaining power. Experimental evidence on money allocations proved that wives do not pool more money than their husbands. She therefore contradicts the stereotype that women are more altruistic, are oriented to collective well-being, and have a lower sense of personal welfare than men. She argues instead for a more nuanced characterization of the breakdown of positions by including women’s reproductive work and domestic labor, much like Rao (2014). She argues further that Sen’s assumption that an internalized false consciousness exists “could also be a culturally approved representation in speech rather than an authentic expression of self-devaluation: or it could be an accurate understanding of individual well-being as dependent.... on the well-being of others” (Jackson, 2013). With this, she also argues for a more relational and multi-dimensional idea of well-being that goes beyond individual capabilities and considers conjugal intra-household relations.

The assumption that women’s participation in decision-making bodies and grassroots organizations is empowering is rejected by Agarwal (2001). She stresses the point that participatory institutions are not necessarily inclusive when it comes to decision-making on the management of natural resources. She distinguishes between nominal, passive, consultative, activity-specific, active and interactive types of participation, of which only *interactive participation* represents effective participation. Interactive participation can be a measure of citizenship and a means of empowerment, which also effects equity, efficiency, and sustainability of community management of natural resources. However, as Zwarteveen and Neupane (1996) have shown, women can have a strong agency and access to resources despite non-participation in decision-making bodies. Participation is determined by *rules*, *social norms* (such as gender segregation of public space, gender division of labor and gendered behavioral norms) and *social perceptions*. Agarwal assumes that women’s abilities to change these factors depend on their *bargaining power with the state, the community and the family, but that women*

*can have subtler, manipulative and deceptive influence on shaping access to resources.* She introduces a bargaining framework for enhancing participation, in which she points out the relevance of enhanced self-confidence and a critical mass of women (in number and with a willingness for change) with a sense of group identity beyond class and caste to express their opinions and to be heard. She also mentions improved male perceptions about women's capabilities and weakened social norms as drivers for enhancing participation.

Das & Nicholas (1981, in Sen, 1990: 126) criticize the viability of personal welfare approaches in societies with strong family-centered perceptions of identity. This is because it is difficult, for example, for an Indian rural woman to talk about her own welfare if her answer would be solely concerned with the welfare of her family. This may also hold true for the WEAI questionnaire, seeing as O'Hara and Clement (forthcoming) identified a strong correlation between the empowerment of husbands and wives, as well as difficulties in identifying individual scores of empowerment. They recommend, for example, adding qualitative questions about women's own perception of empowerment.

In addition, I suggest including qualitative questions on perceptions, which could strengthen quantitative measures towards a more processual and relational perspective. One example would be adding time measurements to a question that asks if interviewees feel overburdened with work; another would be looking at how people assess their own skills, knowledge and influence on decision-making processes. Subtle and manipulative forms of decision-making may take place through agency in the reproductive sphere, and thus the interviewee's satisfaction in terms of their contribution to both productive and reproductive spheres could be measured. Additionally, women's estimation of their own influence on their children, husbands, mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law and other women from their social network could be measured. Furthermore, it is crucial to identify if women have a range of options to choose from, as they could be responsible for making decisions, but not actually have choices. Particularly, women who are the heads of households because of the out-migration of male farmers as force between the feminization of agriculture may seem empowered since they are the household decision-makers, but they may simultaneously feel overburdened and limited in their choices. To bring a long-term perspective to changes in decision-making, how people perceive change in their own empowerment in different dimensions over five or ten years could be measured.

## 8. Linkages to resilience

As a concept originally based on ecological principles, evolved framings of resilience offer several opportunities to reflect on women's empowerment, particularly in the agricultural sector. Resilience describes the capacity of a system to experience shocks while retaining function, structure, feedback capabilities and, therefore, identity (Walker et al. 2006). Adaptive capacities relate to decision-making processes and actions undertaken to adjust a socio-ecological system to future shocks, stresses, or other changing conditions (Nelson et al. 2007). How does women's empowerment interact with resilience in the context of other socio-economic drivers of change, such as increasing male out-migration, and environmental or climate change? This section will provide different insights from studies on how to conceptualize links between women's empowerment and resilience to climate change risks.

One opportunity the resilience concept offers is it allows empowerment to be looked at on spatial and temporal scales. This is because it is an approach that incorporates an understanding of socio-ecological systems; and levels and interactions of household community, institutions and policy. In addition to a spatial scale, change over time becomes an important variable. A temporal scale offers wider perspectives of socio-ecological change, particularly when focusing on adaptability (or adaptive capacities) and transformability (as a normative concept) instead of just an initial definition "to bounce back or return to equilibrium following disturbance, or 'engineering resilience'" (Armitage et al., 2012). For a hybrid approach to complex human-ecological systems, Armitage et al. (2012) attempt to unpack the social dimensions of socio-ecological resilience by linking it to well-being in order to include relational and subjective dimensions. They argue that the interplay of these two concepts "allow for a fuller analysis of the material, relational, and subjective aspects of people's lives (...) necessary to

define resilience of ‘what, to what, and for whom’” (p. 25). Doing so provides better insights for optimization thinking, the role of human agency and values, understandings of scale, “controlling variables,” and threshold and boundaries.

Similarly, resilience could be linked to the particular conceptualizations of empowerment reviewed earlier. One could estimate to what extent different dimensions or indicators for empowerment influence resilience, and how Luke’s three-dimensional view of power could be linked to resilience. Taking Kabeer’s definition into account, the relationship of material, social and human resources, the decision-making process, and well-being outcomes can be examined for their impact on resilience. Most importantly, the awareness and individual availability of and ability to make choices needs to be placed in the particular setting. Finally, the degree to which a setting is an enabling environment needs to be taken into account separately. It may be possible that women who are empowered according to the WEAI are not more resilient than disempowered women, possibly because particular wider structural factors are excluded, or because some dimensions of empowerment are more relevant to resilience than others. Hence, to assess whether empowered women are more resilient, it is necessary to examine to what extent each dimension or indicator of empowerment influences resilience. One could further examine to what extent close relationships and individual or collective empowerment relate to resilience. According to Mahmud et al. (2012), women’s self-esteem is particularly relevant to empowerment, which could strongly influence their perception and attitudes towards their adaptive capacities and, therefore, their resilience.

Furthermore, the underlying conceptualization of power needs to be unpacked in particular settings to determine how resilience can be increased. To what extent does “power to”, “power over”, “power within” and “power with” influence resilience? The second and third dimension of Luke’s power perspectives may embed resilience in a wider context for social change, since they look at *how* control over the political agenda is practiced and *how* potential issues are kept out of political processes. Non-participation in decision-making may make people more vulnerable to hazards, and particular values, beliefs and institutional practices may exclude women from becoming resilient. A well-cited case is the restricted mobility of women and the danger of sexual harassment, which prevents women from staying in shelters (e.g. Climate Change Cell, 2009). When women’s consciousness is influenced by the power of values and institutional practices to such an extent that they are not even aware of their opportunities to enhance their resilience, empowerment interventions to promote resilience have to engage with and challenge these existing cultural structures.

Similarly, Folke (2006) points out how resilience links to other social concepts such as social learning, adaptive capacity and knowledge-system integration, which benefit from change analysis in temporal and spatial scales. He identifies resilience concepts emerging from a narrow technological focus to the inclusion of broader social dimensions (Fig. 6).

Resilience concepts	Characteristics	Focus on	Context
Engineering resilience	Return time, efficiency	Recovery, constancy	Vicinity of a stable equilibrium
Ecological/ecosystem resilience social resilience	Buffer capacity, withstand shock, maintain function	Persistence, robustness	Multiple equilibria, stability landscapes
Social–ecological resilience	Interplay disturbance and reorganization, sustaining and developing	Adaptive capacity transformability, learning, innovation	Integrated system feedback, cross-scale dynamic interactions

Fig. 6: Resilience concepts from a narrow interpretation to a broader socio-ecological perspective (Folke, 2006)

The link to adaptive capacity seems especially relevant when addressing changing gender relations in the agricultural sector. As Bhattarai et al. (2015, p. 130) state in their examination of agrobiodiversity management and climate change in Hansapur, Kaski District in Nepal:

*“the gender–adaptation link is not straightforward, requiring a nuanced view of the interplay between gendered forms of knowledge, power, and decision-making practices in specific social, political, and environmental contexts. Second, gender equity in adaptation cannot be achieved without taking into account other intersecting social differences based on class, ethnicity/race, and other cultural forms of marginalization common throughout the development sphere, such as caste within the study site. Third, the interface of gender and climate adaptation occurs at multiple scales: household, community, national, and international levels; and adaptive capacity of households and communities is contingent upon how gender forms of knowledge and power are linked or disconnected across scales.”*

Adger (2006) stresses common elements of interest between vulnerability and resilience research such as shocks and stresses experienced by the social-ecological system, the response of the system, and the capacity for adaptive action. It may be worth noting that several theoretical overlaps exist with other concepts focusing on multi-scale and multi-level challenges in global change discussions, such as sustainability and robustness (Anderies et al., 2013). Ostrom (2007) integrated different variables into a multitier framework for the study of socio-ecological systems (SES) to overcome simplified models for universal solutions. Locke et al. (2014) argue for linking SES to feminist political ecology (FPE) to address power and agency, intersectionality, and critical reflexivity, as well as “going beyond below the community level” and, to ask from a gender perspective, “resilience of what, for whom and at what cost?” This approach would allow development professionals and academics to unpack resilience in terms of its biases within societies strongly structured by gender, class, caste, and other social divides, and enable a context-specific, yet (post-) structural perspective of power relations influencing resilience.

Based on a literature review of 68 articles, Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013) argue for the concept of social resilience addressing questions of human agency, social practices, power relations, institutions, and discourses. They acknowledge three fundamental principles of social resilience “that make it a concept in the making, which moves beyond its initial meaning, referring simply to actors’ capacity to respond, and enlarged to encompass actors’ capacity to learn and adapt; now the concept also includes their capacity to participate in governance processes and to transform societal structures themselves” (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 13). The three important dimensions of social resilience include (Fig. 7):

*“social actors’ capacities to cope with and to overcome all kinds of immediate adversities (coping capacities), their capacities to learn from past experiences and adjust themselves to pressing new challenges in the future (adaptive capacities), and their capacities to craft institutions that foster individual welfare and sustainable societal robustness in the event of present and future crises (transformative capacities).”*

	<b>Coping capacities</b>	<b>Adaptive capacities</b>	<b>Transformative capacities</b>
<b>Response to risk</b>	ex-post	ex-ante	ex-ante
<b>Temporal scope</b>	short-term	long-term	long-term
<b>Degree of change</b>	low, status quo	medium, incremental change	high, radical change
<b>Outcome</b>	restoration of present level of well-being	security of future well-being	enhancement of present and future well-being

*Fig. 7: Three capacities of social resilience (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 10)*

They further argue for including “context, feedback and connectedness” in a resilience context, while also considering “power, politics, participation” (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 13). In short, many attempts to link resilience to social concepts have given greater insights into socio-ecological change. Thus, it may be worth using aspects of these concepts to embed a gender perspective in wider human-environment interactions.

While social sciences have so far not attempted to examine possible conceptual linkages of empowerment and resilience, the research discipline of community psychology has developed such a transconceptual model (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2013). Acknowledging the lack of consensus regarding the definition, operationalization, and measurement of both concepts, as well as the concern with boundaries and interaction when the terms are used together or interchangeably, the authors recognize these commonalities: empowerment and resilience are both strengths-based approaches, which support marginalized communities and recognize and promote local capacity, local values and cultural contexts to improve quality of life by attending to resources that are inherent or able to be developed within the individual and community. Hence, Brodsky and Cattaneo (2013) label the goal determinants context, power differentials, risks, and resources which interact “kindred community concepts” and view resilience internally and empowerment externally (Fig. 8). The visualization of their contextualization demonstrates that both concepts as processes of action and reflection are embedded within a context of fundamental risk and are based on shared resources.

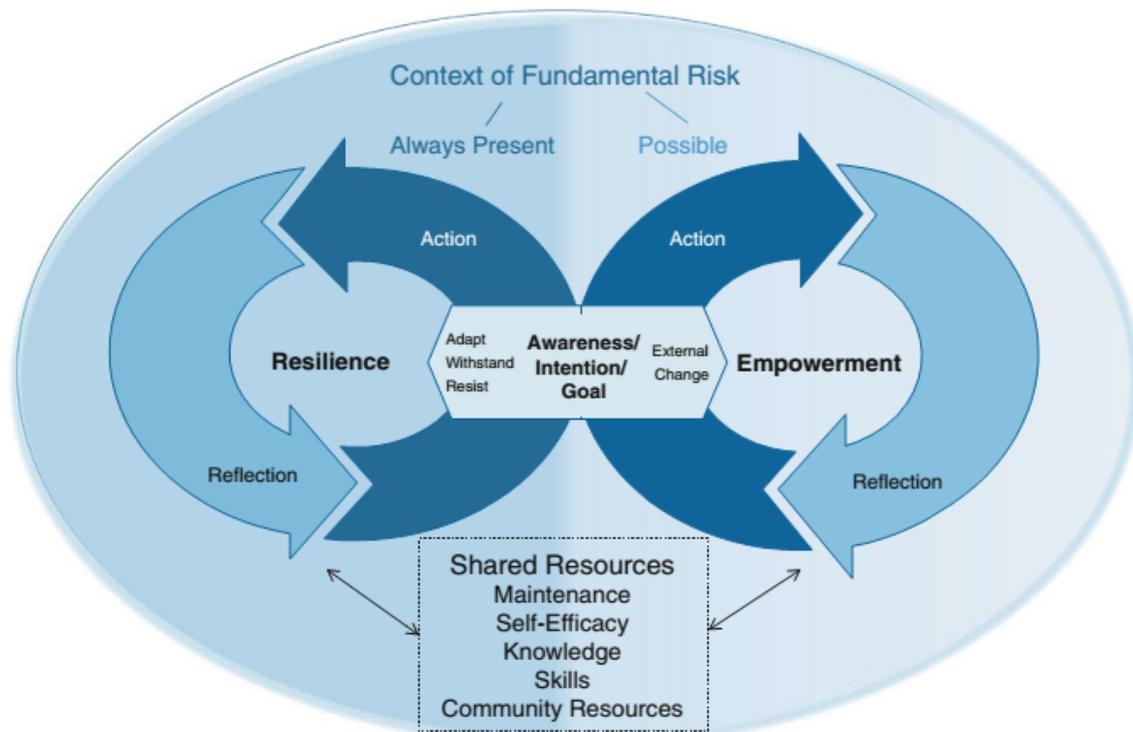


Fig. 8: Transconceptual model of empowerment and resilience (TMER) by the community psychologists Brodsky and Cattaneo (2013)

Although the understandings of the concepts fundamentally differ from those perspectives in developing contexts, this presents one method of linking these concepts. Possible conceptualizations for developing contexts could be a particular link between women's empowerment and capacities for social resilience. Especially when considering the connection of women's empowerment to their household's or community's resilience, empowerment must be seen as a complex *process* that needs to consider gendered power *relations* in particular *contexts* and within both productive and reproductive *spheres*. The studies in this review show that agency is also comprised of covert negotiation and decision-making processes and that social and human resources in particular contexts can help define the extent of women's empowerment. This, however, signifies that achievements are valued differently according to a particular context and thus aggravate the measurement and comparability of empowerment. In-depth analysis can reveal multiple forms and processes of empowerment, which may even lead to greater insights when linked to the wider perspective of climate resilience.

## 9. Conclusion

This literature review has highlighted a relational and processual perspective of empowerment, with Kabeer (1999) providing a theoretical underpinning of empowerment in resources, agency and achievements and Rowland (1998) distinguishing between "power within", "power with" and "power to" (cf. Fig.9). These conceptualisations of empowerment contrast operationalizations of empowerment in the form of measuring decision-making (Alkire et al. 2013) and the presence, use and effectiveness of choice (Longwe 1995), as these represent an individualized and situational perspective on empowerment. Lukes' three-dimensional view of power gives insights into what extent studies, frameworks and indices engage with structural forms of power. His perspective highlights that measuring engagement in decision-making is only a behavioural analysis and does not examine covert conflicts, for example whether grievances are aired or power is exercised to such an extent that perceptions are manipulated. Empirical studies such as Rao (2014), Zwarteveen & Neupane (1996), Joshi (2014) and Guerin et al. (2013) debunk certain assumptions such as that economic empowerment will lead to overall empowerment or that the participation in decision-making processes will empower women. These qualitative studies provide a more nuanced understanding of factors

influencing and mediating empowerment. Such an understanding of empowerment is related to other concepts in gender and development research, such as Kandiyoti's (1988) "patriarchal bargains" and Sen's (2014) "cooperative conflicts".

Most importantly, empowerment needs to be viewed as a highly contextualized, multi-dimensional process of which women themselves have differing perspectives. Hence it is important to understand subjectivities and the respective influencing factors in specific contexts, as well as how they interlink. Approaches to understanding empowerment as a relational and processual concept take social structures and agency into account. The link to resilience may shed some light on how interventions can target particular dimensions of empowerment to foster coping, adaptation and transformative capacities to effectively participate in decision-making processes, which translate into resilience.

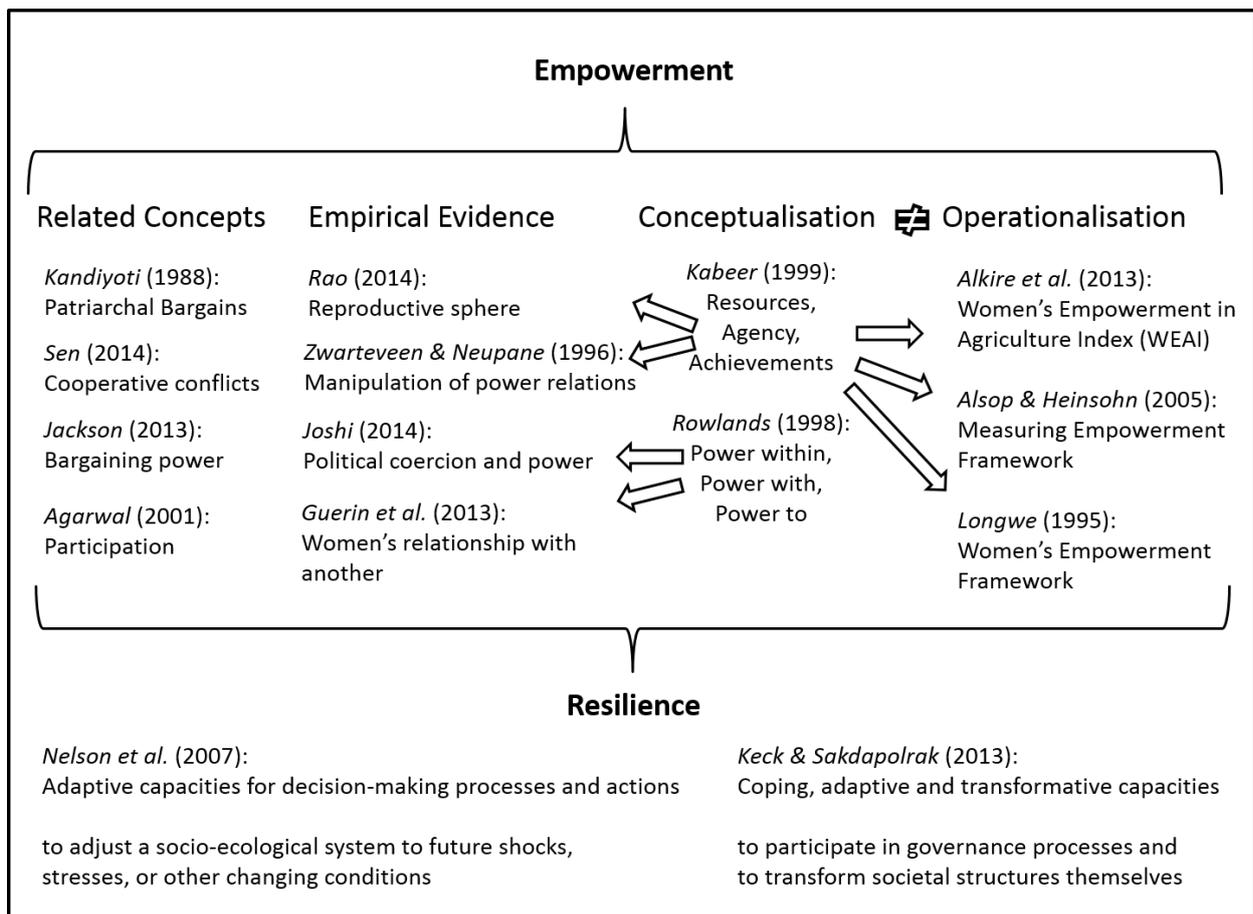


Fig. 9: Conceptualization and operationalization of empowerment in the reviewed literature (source: own draft)

## 10. Appendix

DOMAIN		CONTRIBUTORY FACTOR	LEVEL		
Sub-domain	Macro		Intermediary	Local	
State	Justice	Agency (A) <sup>1</sup>	Degree of Empowerment (DOE) <sup>3</sup>		
		Opportunity Structure (OS) <sup>2</sup>			
	Politics	A			
		OS			
	Service Delivery	A			
		OS			
Market	Credit	A			
		OS			
	Labor	A			
		OS			
	Goods	A			
		OS			
OS					
Society	Family	A			
		OS			
	Community	A			
		OS			
<sup>1</sup> Agency: measured through endowment of psychological, informational, organizational, material, financial, and human assets. <sup>2</sup> Opportunity Structure: measured through presence and operation of informal and formal rules. <sup>3</sup> Degree of Empowerment: measured through presence of choice, use of choice, effectiveness of choice.					

Fig. 10: Measuring Empowerment (ME) Framework (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005)

Type of power relation	An 'agency' approach to empowerment	Transforming 'structures' for empowerment
<b>Power Over:</b> the ability to coerce and influence the actions and thoughts of the powerless	Changes in power relations within households and communities and at the macro level, e.g. increased role in decision making and bargaining power	Respect equal rights of others, challenge to inequality and unfair privileges
<b>Power To:</b> the capacity to act, to organise and change existing hierarchies	Increased skills, access and control over income and resources, and access to markets and networks	Increased skills and resources to challenge injustice and inequality faced by <i>others</i>
<b>Power With:</b> increased power from collective action, social mobilisation and alliance building	Organisation of the less powerful to enhance abilities to change power relations Increased participation of the less powerful	Supportive organisation of those with power to challenge injustice, inequality, discrimination and stigma
<b>Power from Within:</b> increased individual consciousness, self-dignity and awareness	Increased confidence and awareness of choices and rights; widened aspirations and ability to transform aspiration into action	Changes in attitudes and stereotypes; commitment to change

Fig. 11: Operational implications from an agency and a structural perspective of empowerment (Luttrell et al., 2009, adapted from Mayoux 2003)

Type of power relation	Economic capability	Human and social capability	Cultural and psychological capability	Political and legal capability	Protective capabilities
<b>Power Over:</b> the ability to coerce and influence the actions and thoughts of the powerless	Women gaining increased control over income from loans, saving and household production. Ethnic minorities increase their ability to challenge discrimination in access to resources and markets. Wives gain control over productive assets and property.	Women increase control over household consumption and decision making.	Immigrant groups are able to challenge cultural perceptions at community and household levels.	Involvement of ethnic minorities in formal decision making. Engagement with positions of authority by low-caste groups.	Children increase their individual ability to defend against violence.
<b>Power To:</b> the capacity to act, to organise and change existing hierarchies	New immigrants increase their access to income and microfinance. The burden of unpaid work and childcare on women is reduced.	Increased literary skills among Afro-Caribbean boys. Improved health and nutrition status among those with HIV. Urban migrants increase their awareness of, and access to, public welfare services.	Increased mobility and access beyond household for the disabled.	Knowledge of legal and political processes and removal of formal barriers suffered by low-caste groups.	The reduction of risk, vulnerability and insecurity for the over-70s.
<b>Power With:</b> increased power from collective action, social mobilisation and alliance building	International women's groups collectively challenge discrimination.	NGO coalitions develop joint action for increased public welfare provision.	Increased status and dignity among <i>dalit</i> groups.	Participation in movements by informal sector workers to challenge subordination. National networks of community forestry groups lobby for their interests.	Access to networks by the disabled which provide support in times of crisis. Joint action ethnic minorities groups to defend others against abuse.
<b>Power from Within:</b> increased individual consciousness, self-dignity and awareness	Increased levels of self-esteem and recognition of individual economic contribution among immigrant groups. Desire by women for equal rights to resources.	Increased confidence and happiness of the over-70s. Desire by the disabled to take decisions about self and others. Desire by informal sector workers for equal wellbeing.	Increased assertiveness, self-esteem and sense of autonomy among sex workers. Recognition of the need to challenge cultural subordination by <i>dalits</i> .	Desire of immigrants to engage in cultural, legal and political processes. Recognition of the need among ethnic minorities to challenge legal discrimination and political exclusion.	Increased resilience for low-income groups to shocks, disasters, economic crises.

Fig. 12: Examples of outcomes on assets (capabilities) of different definitions of power on a variety of scales (individual, household, group etc.), based on Luttrell et al. (2009, p. 8)

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