

**STRATEGIC IMPACT INQUIRY
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT (FY05)**

FIELD RESEARCH COMPONENT YEMEN

CARE Yemen
July 2005

Chrisje M.E. van Schoot
Diana Hedrich
with Ahna Machan &
Monica Press

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	0
Preface	1
Acknowledgements	1
INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT	2
1. THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK	2
2. YEMEN - THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH	2
3. CARE IN YEMEN	4
3.1 Brief history	4
3.2 Strategic focus	4
3.3 CARE's approaches to programming	5
THE IMPACT INQUIRY IN YEMEN	7
4. APPROACH TO THE RESEARCH	7
4.1 Villages chosen	7
4.2 Methodologies chosen	7
4.2.1 Getting at questions of meaning	7
4.2.2. Addressing power structures within the research process	7
4.2.3. Disaggregating the category of 'women'	8
4.2.4. Qualitative and quantitative indicators	9
4.2.5. Analysis	9
4.3 Core evidence categories considered	9
5. RESULTS	11
5.1 Contributions made by CARE's establishment of women's associations, if any, to the empowerment of women	11
5.1.1. Self-image, self esteem	11
5.2.2. Legal, civil and tribal rights awareness	12
5.1.3. Access to information	13
5.1.4. Educational attainment	13
5.1.5. Employment and economic independence	15
5.1.6. Family labour	16
5.1.7. Mobility	17
5.1.8. Decision making in the household	18
5.1.9. Group membership/Activism	18
5.1.10. Material assets owned	19
5.1.11. Health awareness/integrity	20
5.1.12. Marriage and kinship rules and roles	20
5.1.13. Negotiation habits	20
5.2 Additional findings	21
6. THE LEARNING	23
6.1. The Research	23
6.1.1. Village selection	23
6.1.2. The team	25
6.1.3. Methodology	26
6.1.4. Analysis	28
6.2. CARE's ways of working	28
7. RECOMMENDATIONS	30
7.1. Further research	30
7.2 Improving associations and CARE's ways of working	30

Preface

The mission was carried out between 14 March to 31 July 2005 with the actual village data collection taking place from 10 April to 9 May 2005. Its main aim was to assess the influence of CARE initiated women associations on the empowerment of women in four villages in Mahwit Governorate in Yemen.

The Yemen research mission was implemented as part of the global Strategic Impact Inquiry of CARE's programmes on women's empowerment, encompassing similar research being undertaken in Ecuador, Bangladesh Niger and India.

To line up the research findings from Yemen with the larger SII context, the first 3 chapters of the report were written by Diana Hedrich, (DED seconded to CARE Yemen); Ahna Machan (CARE USA), provided Yemen specific citations from literature and the analysis on respondents economic independence and Monica Press (CARE Egypt) took care of the report outline and the analysis on marriage and kinship roles.

Chapters 4 till 7 were written by the external to CARE research team leader Chrisje van Schoot and deal with the research methodology, the result, the learning and the recommendations, issues specifically requested by CARE Yemen when drawing up the terms of reference for the mission.

The annexes provide all the information and field data on which the analysis was based.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost our thanks and appreciation go to all the village women and men, who took time and effort to receive the team in great hospitality and willingly participated in the data collection.

The dedicated input of the four team members, their hard work, compassion and friendship are gratefully acknowledged here.

The overall support from the office staff of CARE's Headquarters in Sana'a and the Mahwit project team facilitated the work a great deal and is highly appreciated.

Special thanks go to the members of the global SII team for their sound advice and heartfelt encouragements.

The inputs of CARE and DED staff with the analysis and report writing contributed greatly to the end product and deserve a lot of appreciation.

Last but not least our thanks go to the two drivers, who apart from ferrying the team safely to and from the villages, never tired of running small errands for its members.

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

1. THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

CARE Yemen is interested in articulating for itself an empowerment strategy for women that would influence its entire program. Up to the present, CARE has reverted to the use of group formation for women as a practical way to engage them, though this took time over a period of relationship and trust building with a village community. The question which CARE YEMEN would like to answer in order to substantiate an empowerment framework is whether group formation is an effective strategy and if so how effective. This research examines the impacts to date of having assisted women with group formation. CARE Yemen has used the process of the research to build staff capacity and engage in a critical discussion around gender. In addition research findings will inform CARE Yemen's gender strategy as mentioned in the LRSP 2005-2008 and as such influence future programme design and implementation.

2. YEMEN - THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH¹

The situation of women in Yemen is very unique. Amongst the most remarkable observations is the complete separation of women and men in public and private life. This separation is only dispensed within the protected framework of the core family. As such, the core family is the only place where women and men meet, where men can see women unveiled and where they can talk freely. And yet gender relations within Yemen are very complex and diverse, much more so than appearing at a first glance. They vary significantly according to regions and are shaped by diverse religious, cultural, social and political traditions. There are major differences between women who grew up in the former socialist 'People's Democratic Republic of Yemen' in the South and those in the 'Yemen Arab Republic' in the more traditional North, two countries that were united in 1990 as the 'Republic of Yemen'. Another big distinction can be made between the situation of rural and urban women regarding access to basic services, labour division and fertility levels as well as gender relations.

As the research took place in rural areas of Northern Yemen, this chapter will focus on background information relevant to this region.

Yemeni tribal traditions and status inequalities provide an essential background to understanding the current situation of Yemeni women. Traditionally, men and women have very clear roles: Men are responsible for external relations, decision making and economic viability of a household whereas women are responsible for raising children, domestic affairs and for some decisions and tasks related to agricultural activities such as raising livestock. While there are traditions that value women and their role, there are others that lead to a number of disadvantages. The general traditional view on women is that they are "weak" and need protection and as such are dependent. On the other hand, men are responsible to provide this protection and defence. This dependency results in men having a higher status than women, as men are the one to guarantee women's safety and well-being. Other traditional beliefs that put women in a disadvantaged position include:

- Women do not have any legal financial responsibilities for the household but do in return also not have the same rights e.g. in inheritance and custody of children.
- Women's value is measured according to their contribution to agricultural and domestic work and their ability of producing children.

¹ Source: Marta Colburn „Gender and Development in Yemen“. Bonn, 2002.

- The family honour is closely linked to women's modesty and controlled sexual behaviour.
- The inequality in status finds its most visual expression in the practices of female seclusion and veiling.

A very important factor that cannot be underestimated is the fact that women, particularly rural women in tribal areas, are usually not allowed to travel by themselves outside their village. Whenever they want to leave they need to be accompanied by a male family member, a so called "*mahram*". This traditional practice puts major limitations on women's mobility and as such to their access to services and any kind of external interaction.

Some statistics on health and education demonstrate women's marginalised position in rural Yemeni society:

- High fertility rates of 6,3 live children per woman
- High maternal morbidity and mortality rates of between 1,000 and 1,400 per 100,000 births
- Female literacy rate of 32.5 % (compared to a male literacy rate of 72.3%)

Only a low percentage of women is employed by the Government or private companies since their participation in economic activities is influenced by their limited mobility, a lack of supportive infrastructure and services (such as childcare or appropriate transport), their "invisibility" and exclusion, the agricultural division of labour and land ownership. Therefore women's economic activities in the private sector usually take place in a non-formal, private and sex-segregated setting and include activities such as sewing, washing clothes, knitting, making incense, cooking, baking bread, performing music, removing hair, decorating hands and feet with henna (or similar essences) and producing handcrafts.

In the agricultural sector it is estimated that more than 70% of work is done by female farmers. Women's agricultural tasks vary slightly from region to region but women are mainly in charge of the very labour intense rain fed agriculture and production of basic food crops for family consumption. Animal husbandry is also usually under the responsibility of women as is grinding grain by hand, hauling water, collecting fire wood, storing, preserving and processing dairy and food products (whereas men are responsible for irrigated agriculture and the production of cash crops, particularly "*qat*").

Gender issues in the legal sphere include gender gaps in access to courts, discrepancies between traditional and legal rights, application and enforcement of laws as well as laws that disadvantage women (e.g. laws of inheritance and divorce). Though it is evident that there are many discrepancies between men's and women's roles in politics and public life in Yemen, it has to be said that women in Yemen have had the right to vote for two decades and were the first women on the Arabian Peninsula to do so. There are some – so few - women represented in politics, such as two women in parliament and 32 women who were elected to local and governorate level Local Councils.

Despite the classical roles, gender relations can vary tremendously in individual cases based on individual circumstances. Also Yemeni history includes influential women such as the Queen of Sheba, but also influential mothers, wives and courtesans, female patrons of the arts, scholars, poetesses and holy women. There are and have always been factors that are more powerful than sex. Among those factors are an excellent reputation of a family or tribe, power, wealth (money, land, and assets), enabling environment, good education and a strong

personality. This means that a woman, who meets one or more of these criteria, will very likely be more powerful than any man who cannot draw on any of the mentioned resources. It has to be highlighted that traditional roles are currently undergoing a slow but steady transition that will hopefully lead to a stronger and more visible role of women in Yemeni society.

3. CARE IN YEMEN

3.1 Brief history

CARE has been working in Yemen continuously since 1992, implementing a varied portfolio of projects. These have evolved from basic relief (e.g. running refugee camps in Abyan in 1993), through reconstruction after the civil war in 1994, to the current portfolio of development projects. CARE's projects in Yemen are mostly in women's literacy, agriculture, capacity building of local CBO's and NGO's and natural resource management, with a common focus on community self-help and women's empowerment. CARE is also committed to engage in relief activities in the case of emergencies. CARE is active in many Governorates, and within the past few years has implemented projects in Amran, Al Mahwit, Hajja, Sana'a, Abyan and national level projects. CARE International's operations in Yemen are currently funded by: USAID; the European Commission; ECHO; the German Government; the Dutch Embassy; and the British Embassy. CARE Yemen works in close partnership with CARE International members in Germany, USA and the Netherlands. CARE Yemen is affiliated to CARE Australia and reports to and is supported by the Middle East and Eastern Europe Regional Management Unit MERMU.

3.2 Strategic focus

CARE Yemen's mission statement is in line with CARE International's vision and is formulated as follows: "We work with communities and institutions to reduce poverty and increase social justice through capacity strengthening, participatory and empowering approaches, advocacy and partnership & networking."

Within its programme, CARE focuses on the following strategies:

Improving Governance at the local level: Promote and support effectiveness and accountability in Government and civil society in the delivery of services for poor and marginalised people, and good management of resources to that end.

Strengthening civil society: Strengthen civil society groups and institutions so that they represent and voice the issues of poor and marginalised groups, through sustained and effective organisational structures which demonstrate clear visions for the future.

Empowering Women: Support communities so that women in them have more control over the decisions and resources that affect their lives.

Strengthening household livelihoods: Empower households and communities through increasing the quantity and diversity of assets and capacities, reducing their vulnerabilities and promoting the social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups and communities.

Organisational restructuring: Redefine and restructure our systems and capacities so that we are able to demonstrate best practice in the work and the ideals we are promoting.

The current areas of activities are centred around the following sectors: Micro enterprise / income generation, water & sanitation, education (adult literacy and girls basic education), agriculture and will in the future also include preventative health care and awareness.

3.3 CARE's approaches to programming

CARE works through the following approaches depending on the nature of the programme, target group and geographic area:

Direct delivery in emergency situations: CARE Yemen is committed to respond quickly in the event of an emergency in order to mitigate negative impact on the affected population.

Partnerships: Whenever possible CARE will design and implement its projects in close co-operation with partners that share our vision and mission.

Participation: Participation at all levels of the project cycle from needs assessment to evaluation will be included as much as possible in all projects and interventions designed by CARE Yemen.

Capacity building: CARE recognises the importance of capacity building for other organisations as well as its own staff. CARE will offer training opportunities and training on the job as well as promotion possibilities.

Networking and advocacy: In order to strengthen programme impact at the grassroots level CARE acknowledges the need to also facilitate "development friendly" conditions at a policy level. Therefore CARE will become engaged with networks that advocate for such conditions.

Gender equity and diversity: CARE will continue to internally and externally mainstream gender equity and diversity. In terms of gender equity a careful and culturally appropriate approach has to be adapted to the situation in Yemen. Women's empowerment is central to CARE's interventions in the field. CARE Yemen has identified the need for a fully articulated women's empowerment plan, and has undertaken a process of self analysis of the different types of interventions it has so far carried out in women's empowerment. The outcome of this analysis will inform the women's empowerment strategy which will be fully defined by 2006.

Household livelihood security: CARE Yemen will introduce the household livelihood security approach to its programme in order to better understand household livelihood issues and as such more effectively address factors influencing household well being.

3.4 Projects focused on by the research

The four villages targeted in the field research have been involved in two projects. The first project "Poverty Alleviation in Al Mahwit District" aimed at reducing poverty through increased village level capacity for sustainable economic and agricultural development. It was funded by the British Embassy with a total amount of 75.660 USD for a period of 1,5 years from January 2003 until June 2004. The project successfully reached the following results: Rehabilitation of 12 hectares of degraded terrace fields, construction of four drinking water tanks, distribution of 80 sheep and goats, installation of 40 drip irrigation units, establishment of agricultural and veterinary extension networks, formation of five village based women associations, establishment of five women association managed literacy classes, establishment of women association managed poultry units in order to create income for women associations. The women associations in Al Qarn and Beit al Humeidah were formed within the framework of this project.

The second project "Improvement of small farmers' agricultural production and strengthening of rural self-help structures in the Western Highlands of Yemen" is still ongoing and is funded by the German Government and CARE Germany with a total volume of approximately 300.000 EURO for a period of 2,5 years (1.7.03-31.12.05). The project objective is two-fold: To strengthen self-help initiatives through the formation of women and men groups and through capacity building in at least 15 villages in the Governorate of Al Mahwit. And: To increase food security through the increase in size of arable land and increased agricultural production in at least 15 villages in the Governorate of Al Mahwit. Among the results achieved are the rehabilitation of 36 hectares of degraded terraced land, the establishment of

10 kitchen gardens, the establishment of nine biogas units, the formation of 15 village based women associations, the establishment of 10 literacy classes and the establishment of eight income generating activities managed by women associations. The women association in Al Gharbi (Adena) was formed under the described project, whereas men and women in Beit Al Mar'awi participated in parts of the project activities without formally registering an association.

THE IMPACT INQUIRY IN YEMEN

4. APPROACH TO THE RESEARCH

4.1 Villages chosen

Criteria for village selection were:

1. The difference in years of CARE's establishment of women's associations.
2. The travel time from Mahwit (where the team was based) should not exceed 1.5 hours, to maximise the effective data collection in the village.
3. One village without a women's association, to serve as control village.

Seen the time and resources available it was decided in consultation with the global SII team to limit the research from 8 to 4 villages. With the research team being external and unfamiliar with the area and CARE projects, CARE Mahwit staff was consulted, resulting in the selection of the following villages:

- Beit al Humeidah; 2000.
- Al Gharbi; 2002
- Al Qarn; 2004
- Beit al Mar'awi; control village

4.2 Methodologies chosen

4.2.1 Getting at questions of meaning

i. Overview and time line research process

After the February workshop in Cairo on Strategic Impact Inquiry of CARE's programmes on Empowerment of Women, CARE Yemen planned the research according to the following steps and time line:

Literature review	14-30 March
Indicator workshop	21-23 March
Final research design	6 April
Training of research team	7-10 April
Village data collection	11 April-8 May
First Analysis	9-13 May
Analysis workshop	14-16 May
Synthesis workshop (London)	14-17 June
Final Report	31 July

ii. Indicator workshop (see Annex I)

The recommendation for site teams from the Cairo workshop,

“.....to develop key indicators of empowerment as articulated by participant men and women themselves- reflecting their own priorities, conceptions and informing our own.....”²

was followed up by CARE Yemen through the implementation of a 3-days Indicator workshop for CARE office staff of Mahwit, Hajja, Amran and Sana'a HQ and related donor organisations.

4.2.2. Addressing power structures within the research process

i. Team Selection

It was decided to have an all female team as this would give easy access to village women.

² Proposed Global Framework p.6

To safeguard objectivity of data, CARE's preference went for an external team, not related to the CARE activities in Mahwit. Furthermore the team members had to fit the following criteria:

- Being allowed to travel and stay in hotels without male relatives and for an extended period of time.
- Having knowledge about and affinity with rural life and village women and willing to enter northern rural areas which in the educated urban mind are often considered as wild, backwards, dirty and dangerous.
- Having experience with village surveys, being open and flexible to employ participatory methods and willing to enter men's meetings and interview men.
- Awareness on gender issues and agreeing with the principles of women's empowerment (liberal attitude).
- Speaking English and able to translate from Arabic into English and vice versa.
- If employed getting absence of leave from their present jobs.
- Willing to work for a lower fee than donor organisations normally pay in Yemen³.

With only one week available the team leader managed to recruit a team of 4 urban educated women, all originating from the southern parts of Yemen (3 from Aden). Three members were holding government jobs with the ministry of Agriculture and one member was retired, but had been presiding over urban women's organisations and was one of the first female parliament members of the South Yemen (PDRY). Age ranged from 59 to 38, the youngest member being a mother of 5 and the only married member of the team, while two members were divorced and one had never married. Three members took the job for economic reasons (the married member got special permission of her independently employed husband and stopped breastfeeding her 3 month's old baby), while the fourth team member said to take the, for her, underpaid job, because of a longstanding friendship with the team leader. Only one team member was fully conversant in English, one spoke and read it haltingly, while the other two team members didn't speak or read English at all. All of them had experience with mostly formal quantitative village surveys, while two of them knew about participatory methods. All were in different degrees knowledgeable on gender issues and liberal attitude varied from reasonable to almost uninhibited. None of team was familiar with the term Women's empowerment and its underlying principles. The team leader had since 1984 been working in Yemen in various development sectors during long- and short term assignments.

During the 3 days team training special attention was paid to exploring the principles of women's empowerment, research bias and internalising the indicators and specific information needs for the data collection. Remaining time was devoted to explanation and practical exercises of participatory survey techniques. (see training programme, annex VI)

4.2.3. Disaggregating the category of 'women' (see Annex V)

Apart from disaggregating the target group into board members, members and non members as specific respondents in the research design, categories like age, marital status, education, whereabouts husband, economic status, kinship and relations, were added to allow for correlations and triangulations with the analysis and for identifying differential impacts of CARE's interventions on the various categories of women. Most of the categories were based upon findings from CARE field staff participating in the indicator workshop, experience from

³ CARE paid 800 US dollar for 29 days, while for similar jobs donor organisations like EU, Social fund, Western Embassies and Consultant firms pay between 70 -120 US per day.

the research team itself as well as upon the respondent's narratives recorded during the interviews.

4.2.4. Qualitative and quantitative indicators

As according to the Cairo workshop the selected evidence categories could lend themselves for qualitative quantification (participatory numbers), CARE Yemen opted for qualitative data collection.

4.2.5. Analysis

i. who analysed data and how

After finishing data collection and per villages recorded (see Annex III), a 2 days workshop was held for a first analysis of the village data. Apart from the research team, presenting and explaining the data, 2 staff members of CARE Mahwit office participated together with the programme officer of CARE Sana'a HQ. A staff member from CARE UK had been flown in to provide theoretical and contextual input with the analysis. Apart from yielding 45 indicators of empowerment for disaggregating the interviews (later reduced to 35) and a list with preliminary conclusions (see Annex IV b), the workshop proved especially valuable to inform participating CARE staff about the many findings from the interviews. In the weeks after the team leader disaggregated all 60 interviews under the remaining indicators. (see Annex IV a)

When discussing the initial and preliminary findings during the synthesis workshop in London and seen the variations between the 4 villages, it was decided to disaggregated categories per village in addition to the analysis from the 33 indicators cutting across all four villages.

ii participation of women in the research process

The data collection was divided per village into 1 separate visit for introductions, 5 days of actual data collection and 1 separate visit for feedback. (see Annex II, research design)

Apart from gathering general data about the association, its activities and previous CARE interventions, the introductory visits were felt necessary for mutual familiarization and building trust between the team and the association members, explaining the rationale of the data collection and obtaining permission from village leaders and the women for its implementation. Feedback visits concluded the data collection to verify the initial findings, check with inconsistencies and most important to provide women with an overview of their answers and the team's first impressionistic analysis.

Data were collected through informal and semi-structured interviews, small group meetings and focus group discussions, using various PRA techniques, like mind maps, time lines, photographs, poetry, etc. The villages were visited between 9.30 and 17.30 with interviews and group discussions lasting between 30 minutes and 1.5 hour.

4.3 Core evidence categories considered

The following core evidence categories were extensively discussed before and during the indicator workshop.

1. Self-image, self-esteem
2. Legal, civil and tribal rights/ awareness
3. Access to information
4. Educational attainment
5. Employment
6. Family labour

7. Mobility
8. Decision making in the household
9. Group membership-Activism
10. Ownership material assets
11. Health awareness/integrity
12. Marriage/kinship rules and roles
13. Negotiation

Participants recognised and selected these 13 categories as having the most relevance for the Yemeni rural context, especially seen in relation with the very limited amount (or even absence) of power of Yemeni women in most of the categories making up the structural and relational dimensions.

The workshop further generated for every category a large number of indicators denoting women's empowerment in the specific Yemeni context. (see Annex I, Indicator Workshop) While categories like mobility, decision making were quickly recognised as having a direct relation to women's empowerment and generated lots of indicators, participants had difficulties in conceptualising categories like self-esteem, health awareness, group membership/activism and legal right awareness. Once understood, bodily integrity was completely shunned, because of the taboos on discussing sexual issues with a mixed male/female audience and/or in public, and on collectively acknowledging the existence of violence to women, especially in front of foreigners. Marriage and kinship was included as this category was seen as having a strong positive or negative impact on empowerment.

The wealth of indicators generated through the indicator workshop in combination with the team's professional experiences, were used to formulate a number of clear cut questions per evidence category for the data collection. (see Annex II Research Design-data collection tables) With the not well understood and as alien perceived western notion of the empowerment concept, it was decided to explore the constructs of village women to indicate their perceptions of women's empowerment.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Contributions made by CARE's establishment of women's associations, if any, to the empowerment of women.

Empowerment as constructed by the respondents

Women constructed empowerment (what is a strong woman) mainly within the realms of mobility, education, negotiation and decision making within the family, and networking with unrelated men, as illustrated in the following excerpts from the interviews. (The numbers refer to the respondents in Annex III, village data)

"A strong woman can move freely around, organises her family in the house and uses family planning." (B6)

"A strong woman can read and face difficulties. By being educated she can raise her children in better way and argue and get her rights from anyone and can say no to a person who deals with her in an unfair way." (B8)

"A strong woman talks with her brother in a friendly way and without fear." (A9)

"A strong woman is someone who speaks with the men." (D8)

"The educated woman is a strong woman. She can raise a good generation. She discusses with her husband how to spend money for the household and the children." (D7)

"They said that a strong woman has educated children, can defend herself, speak freely, talks with men and can leave the village without permission and by herself, in case she goes by foot. When she goes by car, a male relative should accompany her." (D feedback meeting)

"She is the daughter of the sheikh. She is not happy. Everything come to their house, they hardly go out. She feels she has no power." (D4)

Agency

5.1.1. Self-image, self esteem

The women associations have a clear positive influence on increase in self-image and self-esteem especially with the board members, but also among its members. Through tasks/responsibilities needed to establish and run the association, all board members spoke about changes in their life indicating increased self-esteem and self-confidence leading to more empowerment.

Kifaya is head of the associations' inspection and monitoring committee and:

"... feels effective in improvement of the association. She feels she really got her own value now as head of the committee, especially after three years sitting idle at home. She finds in herself the ability to deal with the people and her life changed, especially her self confidence." (A18)

Jalila the secretary-general and literacy teacher of the association says:

"I have become a model to the village girls and I want to educate them." (A4)

Jalila's old mother being always present during the team's village visits, was very proud and supportive of her daughter, and she kept following the team with a plastic bag containing Jalila teaching materials repeatedly inviting the team to have a look at its contents.

Chair woman Ibtesam is very outspoken:

"I feel much stronger then before, and I'm ready now to continue with other women and make them strong. In the past I was afraid." (A8) She adds that "before the association she could not reply the telephone, but now she is able to do this and she can meet with the male veterinarian."

Hannah the treasurer goes to the bank, puts the money there and signs. "I feel like a business woman and important. I'm not ashamed anymore to go there as a woman by my self."(B18)

Chair woman Samira learned about using a stamp;” before I did not know this. I can also now sign the stamp with my own name and count and record the eggs from the poultry unit.” (C1)

The majority of members indicated that attending the association’s literacy classes and becoming literate now, (even with many of them just having a smattering of literacy skills) had positively influenced their self-image and self esteem.

The childless wife (app. 40) of the sheikh, Latifa concluded her rather sad narrative by saying that “I feel better as since attending literacy class I can at least think better and speak fluently.”(C11) and Warda (A1), by being the eldest daughter in the family having had no chance to go to school like the rest of her brothers and sisters: “feels now equal to her brothers and proud to help her little sisters with their homework “. (A1)

During a focus group discussion with men, they said that “Literacy classes were a success, as the women became more motivated.” (A10)

In only two instances a negative influence of the association on self-esteem was recorded, one of these with Latifa the poultry supervisor (C4) telling the team how diminished and upset she felt when the husband of the chair woman had taken away her duties for egg selling in the village and given it to his wife.

In view of the answers from most women in the control village stating that: “we are empty cartons, very poor, there is no hope, I’m unhappy in this village.” (D8, D4) which were recorded much more times than with association members in the other villages, it feels further safely to assume that establishment of associations and providing literacy possibilities for its members do have a positive influence on self-image and self esteem.

5.2.2. Legal, civil and tribal rights awareness

The interviews yielded no proof of the association having an influence on increase of awareness on legal, civil and tribal rights.

Except for tribal rights, women had very little awareness on legal rights and most respondents didn’t make a distinction between tribal and legal rights. With the two right systems in use at the same time and tribal laws often given preference over legal laws esp. if these turn out to be more favourable for the strongest party, this comes as no surprise. There was no difference in rights awareness with board members, members and non-members and even not with the three women who are or had been involved with the leading political party. The information on voting by some of the respondents was never mentioned in relation with the questions on their awareness of rights. Some women stated that they did not know about “laws of the government”, while others started to mention their duties like “looking after the children and husband, asking permission for anything you want to do and obeying him and being honest.” (A8 and A18).

Only one respondent mentioned “the right on education and health, selecting your own husband, but this would actually depend on her father.” (A8) while another woman explicitly stated that women “should not suffer violence and be provided with clothes and food.”(B7)

One woman stated that “the woman has to right to go to the house of the parents when big problems with her husband and family in law can not be solved.”(A18) and actually 4 women told the team about having repeatedly and temporarily left their husband and in-laws household, illustrating their awareness and use of this tribal right. “Recently she went to Sana’a because she was very angry with her husband. He took the cow for ploughing, while she was very much against it, because

he should rent a bull for that. Their cow died and a new one cost 60.000 YR, while the rent of a bull is 3000 YR. She said she was so angry that she not only shouted with her husband, but was beating him and putting her hands around his throat. Her daughters had to come between them and separate them. She said that the cow was shared between her and her husband, not her sole property. She is still sad that she lost her cow. She only came back from Sana'a, after her husband had paid her 60.000 YR as refund for the cow and she bought a new one." (C9)

Even when exercising their legal rights, like voting, women seem to have little awareness about the possibilities on exercising their empowerment through this issue. In the control village "Women said they all voted during the parliament elections in 2003. The sheikh made sure that all of them had a voting registration and told them they were free to elect who they wanted. However they all voted for their sheikh, they said, because he is very good and helps the poorer families in the villages." and according to another respondent "When she went to the elections (2003) she asked her husband and he mentioned the name which she should vote for."(A17)

5.1.3. Access to information

Women love to listen to the radio and watch TV and apart from enjoying soap series and some women watching the news, many respondents said they like programmes explaining health matters and phone-ins, where daily life problems are being discussed. Apart from getting information from radio, TV, through other family members, health centres were also mentioned as providing information to women when going there. Association members attending literacy classes mentioned to be informed on basic health matters by the literacy teacher.

Although one would assume that increase of literacy skills through attending the literacy classes of the association would lead to improved access to written information and one respondent mentioned that "since the literacy course she watches more TV, as she now can read the written text."(A1) confirmed in a men's meeting; "their women watch better TV and can now read the captions and names with soap series."(A10) the fact that, apart from the Koran and school books, there is hardly any written material available in the villages (some of the women had never seen magazines) leads to the conclusion that the association has had limited impact on furthering women's access to information.

5.1.4. Educational attainment

Most village women see education as very important and the basis for improving life and remarks like: "Education is light and ignorance means darkness, or education is like a weapon in your hand,"(A6, B3, D14) were repeatedly recorded during the interviews.

Some respondents mentioned that "an educated woman can discuss any issues with her husband better than when she is not educated." (C6)

Compared with the past "they had no knowledge and no education and all of them were djinn (devils) and Miriam had asked Allah to help this generation; she likes to have her 4 years' old daughter educated from now until she dies. She could even become a doctor and cure the people and serve our people; because we suffer from bad life. Miriam would like to study literacy so she can read and write, because now she feels blind, she says. The life needs development." (D8)

While women see education as a chance for paid employment and working outside the house, men seem to attach importance of education for women for less altruistic reasons;

“illiteracy among women is a big problem, because if women can read they will know more about religion and their life and will be better in looking after their sons with homework and taking care of the children...” (C2)

“educated girls are able to support their husbands and raise their children in a good way. Thus the family will be in a better position. I want to educate my daughters, because I’m suffering from their mother (his wife). She has no education and I tried to give her lessons in praying, but even when I was doing that, she kept talking about other things, e.g. about the neighbours what they did that day etc. It was no use.” (D12)

Many women spoke clearly with regret, when they mentioned that they had to take their daughters out of school or had to leave school themselves after becoming 10 or 12 years old, because of male teachers, mixed classes, having to travel to a school in another village or for assistance with work in the household. “Hafidah’s eldest daughter is 10 and attended primary school till the second class. Now she attends the literacy course. She took her daughter out of school because it is too far and she needed her daughter to help her at home..... Why does she want her daughter now again to become literate, while first she took her out of school? Hafidha says because she doesn’t want her daughter to become like her self, as she feels like a donkey. And in the future she can marry an educated man, who could provide a better life to her daughter.” (B13)

With the association providing a literacy course, a female literacy teacher and a specially built classroom in the association’s village, the paramount reasons for denying women education are taken away. Women mentioned that attending literacy class was the main and often only reason for joining the association and that they had often been encouraged by husbands, fathers and brothers. “Her mother and her father paid for the contribution..... Her father encouraged her and her sister to go to the literacy course. (C8)” and while Fathya’s family in law “refused initially that she would attend the literacy course, she insisted and argued and then she attended the course, and her husband supported her. He talked with her father in law and discussed that it would be good because she would be able to take better care of her children.” (C13)

No further mentioning was made of male family members refusing the women to attend literacy classes.

Especially older women, without having had any chances for education in the past and often considered as ‘being beyond education’ -also initially by themselves- have now the possibility to become literate. Although no age numbers of participants of the literacy classes were recorded, the team met with several women older than 30 who had attended the classes or wanted to. With two daughters having passed last years’ literacy course, Fatima of 60 said: “If I would be able to buy glasses, I will go to literacy class myself.” (C9)

Many members and the illiterate board members proudly told the team that they had improved their literacy level by attending the association’s literacy course. They used their newly acquired skills for “reading letters from husbands or brothers, “writing letters for the illiterate husband” (B8), and many women mentioned their joy of being able to better read and understand the Koran. Through sending their daughters to literacy class or going themselves women said that it had given them a better appreciation of importance of education.

“Before Samira attended the literacy course, when her children didn’t like to go to school, she encouraged them to stay at home. But these days she beats them and chases them out of the house to school.” (C1) “Amina’s daughters kept written material at home and Amina seeing no use for it in the past, threw everything away, but not anymore since her daughters attended literacy class last year.” (B7)

Besides raising the level of educational attainment of its members, the association has a positive impact on improving the education of board members through CARE’s training

courses on financial and administrative skills, the TOT for literacy education and the informal guidance the board members receive from CARE staff during the first 1.5 year of having the association in operation. Jalila, the literacy teacher “bought felt pens and large sheets from her own money because she learned on the TOT course good and useful methods and she liked to do them in her class as well.”(A4) and Fayza attending the same course said “she learned especially how to communicate with people and she felt she became more educated. Also working with examples from the daily life in the literacy course was very useful for her.”(B19)

While Hannah learned how to prepare her financial report and “feels better equipped than before the CARE training course” (B18), poultry supervisor Fayruz while showing the team around in the poultry unit, relates that “ she learned many things about keeping chickens from CARE staff coming to the village.” (B2)

5.1.5. Employment and economic independence

It is important to note that the association structure was designed to provide literacy classes, with the poultry unit as vehicle to generate income to pay for a teacher’s salary to sustain the education programme and a salary to the poultry supervisor for running the poultry unit. So, while the association is the method/vehicle to reach women, its design differed from the other CARE’s previous interventions towards women, notably the sheep project where women received or shared a pregnant ewe and could sell the off-spring individually.

“She participated in the sheep project and got 2 sheep from CARE. She sold the 6 male offspring, kept the female lambs and now she has four sheep. From the money she earned she bought wheat, sugar and other things for the household.” (C1)

It does not appear that the poultry unit as income generating project benefited individual association members through their own share of revenue to use for their families other than the teacher and poultry supervisor and one chair woman, who seemed to have exclusive control and use of the project’s resources. Yet, in all villages women’s comments often indicate awareness of their social position due to a lack of income and a desire to have an opportunity for an increased livelihood. “Warda said they are poor because they don’t have a cash income and work in the field all the time, without really earning money. They feel compassionate about the men, because they work hard and provide the money for the family. Women’s work is without money, so they feel it as having less value.” (B5) “Fatima thinks about her life, how to improve it and she wants to learn sewing. Why don’t you give us sewing machines, she asks.” (D5)

“Fatima started to grow fruits trees in the fields they rent and this gave her confidence because she earned money. Now she can give her fruit and some of her money to the poor and this makes her feel better.” (D1)

From all the 60 women the team interviewed, only one woman was holding an official government job as teacher of the primary school in her village. Three other women had held temporary paid jobs for the leading political party during the elections of 2003.

“Ibtesam gives her salary to her father and he says, everything we have now it because of Ibtesam. He respect and trusts her. Now she controls the house, her brothers and her father. Even the money for paying qat of her father she decides. And she pays for the telephone bills and electricity. She bought the TV and a satellite receiver on her name. She bought a satellite and pays the subscription from her monthly salary.” (A8)

By having an association at least two women can be employed and, apart from becoming a role model for others and positively influence awareness on employment of women within the village, constitute an impact on economic independence and empowerment.

“Jalila’s respect is increased and she has more power, she says, because she earns a salary and the members of her family start to listen to her and take her opinion into account. They have more meat

per week for the family (her salary goes to the family as everybody else's does). In the past they could only buy small amounts of rice and wheat but now they buy 5 kg. instead of 1 kg." (A4) "Fayruz spends the money she earns on buying golden earrings and a lamb, which she raises now to have more lambs for selling," (B2) "Fayza gave money to her father to buy goods for his small shop. For herself she bought a golden ring and a modern skirt and blouse." (B19)

Although in most cases the employment opportunities the association provides have a positive impact on the women receiving their salary, in one instance the job with the association had a disempowering effect on the women involved. "When Latifa's husband is home from his job in Sana'a, he receives her salary directly from the husband of the chair woman. 'Did he give you anything from your salary so you could buy anything for your self?' Till now she got one dress from her husband. He spends the money for the household, buying wheat, sugar, rice and tea. He spends his own salary for himself in Sana'a on food, qat, cigarettes. In case Latifa gets the salary herself, she sends someone from the village to al Tawila to buy things for the household." (C5)

5.1.6. Family labour

Family composition in combination with marital status seem of direct influence on the reduction of family labour for active board members as these were mostly unmarried and lived in large and/or extended families. Attending literacy class temporarily reduced the workload and seems to be reserved for members with families where other household members could take over some of their daily tasks. "Rawdha does a lot of daily chores at home as she is the oldest child in the house, so we asked her if following the literacy classes had made her more busy or overburdened her. She insisted this had not been the case and because of her father's encouragement she was made free to attend the lessons in the afternoons and study in the evening." (A1) "Hanaan's father took over the sheep herding task of her sister so she could go to the literacy course. Another sister took some of the tasks of Hanaan." (C8)

Main reasons for not attending literacy class or dropping out were getting pregnant, sickness in the family or too busy with work for the family. In Al Qarn the literacy class was suspended during the agricultural season, when participants could no longer be missed for work or not replaced by other household members.

In view of the above, it can be concluded that for other family members, notably the women, the workload increased. With the value and status attached to education, holding positions in the board, as well as in some cases the families receiving economic benefits, women and men probably see it as their duty to work more for the general well being of the family and this might be the reason that no comments or complaints were recorded.

As with acquiring literacy skills women reported that "now they would help their children or brothers and sisters with their homework", this task comes on top of their workload. The team is however under the impression that women didn't seem to consider this as extra burden, but more as a valuable asset to their role and position in the family. Moreover helping the children occurs during the afternoon and evening hours, which the women, when describing their daily tasks, called 'resting' periods.

Men in al Qarn voiced it differently; when the team asked during a men's gathering: "if the workload of the women wasn't increasing now they were helping the kids with their home work, they laughed and said: 'Women are not overloaded in this village, in the afternoon they are free. In Al Rujum, the women work hard, they even plough the fields behind the ox, but here they only work on the land during harvest time'." (A10)

5.1.7. Mobility

Except for old women, female mobility is very restricted in Yemen and also in the researched villages, as is illustrated by the following excerpts from the interviews: “Her mobility outside the village is only with her male relatives. Inside the village single girls don’t go far from the house.” (B7) “One and half year ago she left the village for the first time in her life. She suffered from bleeding and went to the hospital in al Marwa with her husband and daughter.” (D10) “When she goes out of the village, she calls her husband by mobile telephone in Saudi to ask permission. Her father in law owns the mobile phone. Sometimes her husband refuses but most of the time she gets permission.” (B3)

The association has a marked positive influence on the mobility of most of its board members and to a lesser degree on its members. Inside the village, board members said to have full freedom now to move around and as frequent as they like, while members can go to literacy class without having to ask permission from their family every time.

“The difference with the past is that now she attends the meetings with association and could go to the literacy course last year.” (A7) “Last year with the start of the association, her brother prevented to go to Al Gharbi from her own village and now because of her good relations with the members and board, he allows her to go. When the literacy teacher is absent, Nachla takes over. She went to the TOT course in Mahwit as well.” (C3)

Mobility outside the village has increased especially for board members, when attending CARE’s training courses and following up the association’s administrative and financial responsibilities with the official organisations in nearby towns. Although often being accompanied by male relatives, protecting women’s honour and respect and is very convenient as men can be sent on running errands, permission to do so is less and less needed. “These days she can go to the agriculture office and CARE office, by herself without permission. Her family knows now what she is doing. With her teaching job she only goes from the house to the school and back again. Previously by being only a teacher she moved in a very little circle, now with the association she crosses these borders and her world has become bigger and more interesting.” (A8) “Every afternoon Khadija goes down from Al Tawila to Al Gharbi for teaching at the literacy course. She attended the TOT course in Mahwit. Her husband was with her in the first weeks but left after that. Then another male relative took over and looked after her food and helped her.” (C5)

In one village however the newly acquired mobility of the chair women and treasurer at the start of the association were not maintained, as the husband of the chair women took over all responsibilities for running the association. “In the beginning of the association she went twice to the bank with the two other board members and her husband. Afterwards her husband refuses her to go to the bank and says, ‘who will stay with the children and the woman should stay at home’. She has the feeling she can go to the bank, but for the moment she likes that a man would go with her. In future she will have enough confidence to go alone once she gets the routine. Mohammed, her husband has promised her to take her next time to the bank together with the treasurer.” (C1)

The main reason for women being restricted in their mobility is to avoid them having contact with unrelated men. During discussions with village men the following was recorded:

“Another man sitting with the group cuts in and says, the girls can go to school till they can write ‘habibi’ (my love), because educated girls can write letters in secret to their lovers and start speaking to anyone.” (D13) “To what extent will they accept a strong woman? When would a woman be too strong and powerful, to their liking? They said they would accept a strong woman if she keeps her right and duties at a level of acceptance otherwise they will stop her. She should not ignore her traditions or leave her duties. Or speak to strangers.” (A10)

Women reported that through the association they were feeling more comfortable and less ashamed to face and deal with male persons in and outside the community. As many

respondents mentioned dealing with men as one of the characteristics of a strong woman, the association can be considered as having a strongly felt impact on empowerment of especially its board members. “When Ibtesam was asked which job had given her more power she immediately replied without any hesitation that her work with the association had empowered her more than her teaching job. Because she had to deal and talk with men, had to go to different places and establish relationships with many people in different functions. When the men were scolding her that the association was making no profit, she now replied to them without shame.” (A8) “Fayruz face lightens up when suddenly remembering during the feedback meeting, that when a few years ago male CARE staff came to visit the village, she was afraid to talk with them and felt ashamed to be near them, she even left the nursery when one of them entered the space inside the netting area. Now she feels confident to talk with them and she feels it is okay to be with them inside the nursery.” (B2)

5.1.8. Decision making in the household

The associations seem to have a positive effect on the decision making in the household, as several women reported that communication with especially their male family members had improved, and they were now able to influence or even take decisions on issues which before they could not even discuss or were afraid to do so.

“In the past Ibtesam says, she could not take any decision about her self and could not discuss anything with her male relatives. Now she can and she takes a lot of decisions; she is able to control her family and if she wants to change anything in the house they agree. Even the money for paying qat for her father she decides.” (A8) “These days her brother is very proud about her. He said to his mother ‘my sister has changed and she is educated now’ Now she has a decision on who to marry and that is both because of her education as well as the membership on the board and teaching.” (A4)

Although this change is especially seen with board members, members participating in the literacy course mentioned that attending these classes improved their communication skills at home and increased their influence on decision making in the household. “She can discuss better with her husband than before. Topics they discuss are the importance of education, the future of the children, that her son could be a doctor or her daughter a teacher.” (A2) “She asks him for how much he was able to sell each and every crop, discusses with him saving money for their children and she argues with him about his spending of money on qat and cigarettes.” (B8)

5.1.9. Group membership/Activism

The feeling of group membership was most pronounced with board members and those respondents who participated in the literacy course or had daughters, sisters or mothers attending the classes. These women appeared proud to be member of the association and often volunteered the information about paying the contribution and how they generated this fee. Few non members said to regret having no money to join.

Other members and non-members expressed their disappointment with the association and the income generating activity making no profit⁴, although a few mentioned the advantage of being able to buy eggs in the village. With no financial transparency in two of the three associations towards its members, the negative feelings come as no surprise. Moreover it generated a lot of gossip and bad feelings in one village towards the chair woman and her family.

It is interesting to note here that from the three villages, CARE had been working the longest period in the latter one and through the years the active chair woman had managed to secure

⁴ Admitting of profit will often lead to people asking for financial assistance and it is culturally unacceptable not to help out when money is thought to be available.

support for building a water reservoir, a commercial nursery, a sheep project and recently the women's association. All 4 projects are on her land and now firmly under her control, with her family almost exclusively benefiting from it. During the research it was learned that CARE is about to start this year its fifth project by building another water reservoir to serve more household, as the present one is used by the chair's family for the nursery.

In the third village the association had a positive impact on activism when women joined action to defy the men when they got angry upon discovering that the village got project support for women only and refused to help with building the literacy class room and poultry unit. "All work was done by the women, every member carried each fifteen stones on their heads to the building sites, brought water and sand and although it was very heavy, they felt very strong about this. Ibtesam said 'We showed the men that we could do it by ourselves that we didn't need them and were independent from them.'" (A8 & A19 feedback meeting)

Moreover with the poultry unit indeed losing money in this association, board members and members had meetings to discuss other income generating activities. "They might do something on sewing, buying material, sewing dresses and selling them. They also think of buying and selling bottled gas. They also discussed the idea of sewing uniforms for the school and sell it, but the problem is that these are only needed once a year. Fayza, Ibtesam and other members talk a lot about these ideas, but they cannot do anything now. They first need to get more money and want to do this by increasing the number of women in the association." (A2)

5.1.10. Material assets owned

Although women inherit and do own land, male family members will decide on which crops to cultivate and selling or buying land. Proceeds of cash crops will be mainly used for the family. Women have full control over the dairy cattle, and over those sheep and goats which fall under their direct ownership. Women decide on proceedings of sales, which are mostly spent on direct household needs, but when the family is considered relatively well taken care off, they might spent part of their earnings to buy gold, a special dress or reinvest in buying sheep.

Most women own gold, which they get as part of the dowry and is their security for bad times. In a meeting with men they said that "a woman is free to use and spent her own money as she likes or sell her gold and start her own business and can decide for that herself." (A10)

Women will not openly speak of their assets, certainly not to strangers and to persons connected with projects, villagers will make sure they come across as very poor and in need of direct support. "She owns 4 cows. First she told Najwa she had 2 cows, but later on in the discussion she let it slip that there were four." (D14)

This was especially noticeable in the control village, where women repeatedly stressed being very poor and in need of project support. "Her husband doesn't have a regular job, only sometimes. She thinks about her life, how to improve it and she wants to learn sewing. Why don't you give us sewing machines, she asks. She compares her life in this village with her previous life in her home village. She is unhappy. There is no solution." (D5); "Suaad adds that they need a literacy course in the village and they want sewing machines and income generating projects."(D3)

Women were rather secret about the amount of livestock they owned and although the team is under the impression that the sheep projects initiated by CARE in two villages, had benefited the women, no exact numbers could be recorded.

5.1.11. Health awareness/integrity

Although women reported to get information on health from the radio and through visits to the health centre, some influence on improving health awareness can be attributed to the association's literacy classes, as participants mentioned that health issues were being discussed during the lessons. (see also 5.1.4 Educational attainment) "She says it was also important that women would learn more about health, although through the association their health awareness was increasing." (A2)

The increase in self-esteem coupled to improved literacy skills and thus potentially having more access to information, might however form a good basis for a new awareness on bodily integrity in future, especially in view of the respondents' willingness and interest in discussing family planning with the team. "Now she is pregnant for the second time. After this baby she wants to take IUD or contraceptive pills. He husband agrees with this she said. He said I agree with anything which makes you comfortable." (C14) "She knows about family planning and tried to convince her husband, but he refused. She hopes that after her second delivery, she will manage this family planning with him." (D7) "Concerning family planning they agreed that there is more awareness and talk about it then in the past and that in's Allah, the daughters will have more chance to practice it than their mothers." (D- feedback meeting) "She will try to have only two kids. I will try to convince my husband she says".(C15) In this village the women have to work very hard, and get pregnant very soon after being married and they have many children. She does not want to become skinny and sick like her mother, because of her many pregnancies. Jamila however says that she doesn't know what to do in order not to become like her mother." (D4) "Yaser said that he would start to think about family planning after he had 13 children." (D13)

No marked differences in health awareness between the control village and the association villages could be established, and without more in-depth research on the specific influence of health discussions during literacy classes compared to the health information women receive from radio, TV and health centres, this remains unclear. However with family planning matters not or superficially mentioned on the radio and by (male) attendants of health centre, women lack sufficient information to increase the basis for sound reasoning with themselves and with their equally ill-informed husbands. "She doesn't know what to do about family planning. She has heard about the IUD (lawlab) from other women in the village. All women say that the lawlab causes bleeding, so she doesn't want one." (B4) "She is afraid from having an IUD as it will fall out if you carry heavy loads. Between her pregnancies are 1.5 and 2 years, just by itself in a natural way by continuing breastfeeding. She is also afraid from contraceptive pills because other women say it causes bleeding. However some women do use pills in the village. One woman uses the new method, by injection or strip on the arm for a number of months." (B13)

Structure

5.1.12. Marriage and kinship rules and roles

(*Monica*)

Relationships

5.1.13. Negotiation habits

Women are often using mainly non-verbal negotiation techniques to affirm or change their positions within the family and their husbands and during the indicator workshop participants mentioned that women will get their way by: "Breaking pots, beating the animals, fake illnesses (headache, back pain) and by using her children and making them cry in front of their father." (see Annex I, results day 2 indicator workshop)

As last resort women might leave their husbands and go back to their parental house.

“She had to do everything in the house before and even when she was pregnant. Her brothers in law didn’t respect her and they said bad words to her. If the brothers in law insult her or criticize her she stops them, not directly (dangerous) but through their father and mother. She left the house with her baby and went to her father. The doctor came to the house to cure the baby and after this her husband took her back but only after he had agreed to her condition that she wanted a room for herself and cook separately. So that’s how she got her own room.” (D7)

Respondents mentioned that since being a member of the association and having attended literacy class, they had started to negotiate with and between family members and neighbours. “When some of the literacy students dropped out of the class she went to the men in the family and persuaded them that the women should re-attend. She also learned to deal with problems between female members and their husband esp. on paying the contribution.” (A8) “Also cooperation with her neighbours has improved, in case there are problems she knows better what is good and what is wrong.” (A2)

Thus the association can be attributed to at least influence the negotiation habits from non-verbal actions towards verbally bringing up issues and having more confidence and skills in doing so. (see also 5.1.8, decision making in the household) “Nachla mentions that once her mother and sister in law were fighting about division of work in the house and she tried to convince her brother to convince his wife to work with them. So she discussed now these things, before she would not do that.” (C3)

5.2 Additional findings

In villages with associations women are more used to organised forms of talking, they have better meeting discipline and are more able to express them selves and listen to each other than was observed by the team in the control village.

“The feedback meeting in the control village turned into a complete pandemonium, with women screaming on top of their voices to be heard, not listening to each other or the team, starting heated discussions among themselves and when not quickly receiving attention, getting up and seating themselves before or sometimes even on top of the team members. They then started pulling our sleeves or even grabbing our chin and turning our head towards them to make us listen.”

Male involvement with the association tends to lead to disempowerment of women. (for more details see 6.1.1 Comparing associations)

“Saleh, the son of Hakima is doing everything. He takes the money and supervises the work in the poultry unit, the nursery and he also supervised the construction of the literacy class.” (B18) The CARE staff said that when Saleh still had a lot of control, “the chicken didn’t produce eggs on Thursdays and Fridays.”⁵

Samira’s husband helps her with running the association, he markets the eggs, goes to the bank, write the receipts for membership fees and fills in the book, as she is not really literate. During our first visit Samira was hardly saying anything. Her husband was talking with us and she kept a rather demure posture. Samira and the other board members went only once with him for signing. Khaula asks Mohammed why Samira cannot go to the bank more often. He says the women cannot go for marketing the eggs because it is difficult with the men in the hired cars and holding and carrying the boxes with eggs is difficult for them. Cars are often open pick ups and very crowded. (marketing eggs and going to the bank is combined in one trip to Al Tawila). He can find places to sell the eggs. ‘Did you try to give the board members like Samira, more responsibilities? I tried several times to explain the bookkeeping and other things, but they cannot do it, they cannot understand these matters. I’m

⁵ During the weekend men often buy good quality and expensive qat.

busy enough as I am. But what can I do, they need my help and I want to help them to run this association. Especially in the beginning it was very difficult with them. They don't know anything.' He continues by saying that he helps the association, as the women are illiterate. He is the representative (mandub). The women agreed that he would be their representative. He buys the fodder and he does all the calculations for the association. The women can not learn this.

"Can the literate board members not take over the bookkeeping? we ask him and we saw on his face that he became uneasy with these questions and no answer came. Our impression is that he doesn't like that others would take over." (C2)

The following organisational development issues have an impact on how women deal with external factors and threats including male interference:

- Lack of knowledge of board members' roles and responsibilities
- Lack of understanding of aims and objectives of the association
- Varying leadership skills
- Lack of sufficient management and administration skills

Lack of financial transparency and internal communication within the association leads to village gossip and is undermining the association's role.

There seems to be a link between employment and education and later marriage and visa versa and there seems to be a direct relationship between the state/stage of the marriage, migrating husbands and empowerment.

6. THE LEARNING

6.1. The Research

6.1.1. Village selection

The selection criteria of having villages with different starting dates for the associations to identify possible effects of time was actually not valuable as all three associations had been established at the same time in early 2004. When listing the number of villages, answering one of the criteria, CARE Mahwit staff had taken as starting point in time, the previous CARE interventions for women, like the nursery- and sheep projects, which was only discovered by the team during the first week of the data collection. Furthermore, and also unknown to the team, CARE Mahwit staff had only selected those villages with associations directly financed by CARE Yemen and had excluded the associations financed by international donor organisations in Yemen, which were all established before 2004.

Without any desire to incriminate the hard working and dedicated CARE Mahwit team, the impression was gained that some of the male staff in Mahwit office, although already much more gender conscious than most men in Yemen, feel embarrassed and underrated when having to involve themselves with ‘female issues’ and still consider gender issues and interventions for women, as matters to be dealt with by women rather than men. Perceiving the preparations of the data collection not as their immediate responsibility and consequently having taken insufficient interest in a research dealing with empowerment of women, the actual village selection tasks were probably immediately delegated to the female staff without providing these women with sufficient and accurate background on the for the team necessary information.

Comparing the associations

The team noted clear differences between the associations, especially concerning leadership styles, educational attainment of its board members and the level of involvement of men, which had a direct influence on the level of empowerment of its board members and members.

In Al Qarn (village A) the association is run exclusively by women, with the active board members having finished secondary school, mostly unmarried, the chair woman (around 28) holding a government teaching job and the secretary-general (25) being a long standing and active member of the leading political party. Leadership style came across as open, financially transparent and active, with the board members holding regular meetings among themselves, but also with interested members, and some of the association committees having activities. Members expressed their loyalty and involvement to the association i.e. by joining forces when building the literacy class and poultry unit, going around to recruit more women and some of them attending the regularly held meetings. The team did not record any gossip about the association and its board members in this village. It is really a pity that just with this association, its sustainability might be at stake as the poultry unit was struck by disease and losing rapidly its profit.

In Beit al Humeidah (village B), the association is run almost exclusively and increasingly by one extended family, with the involvement of 2 male family members. The board is made up by a very dominating chair woman (40), married and practically illiterate, and rather young women, mostly unmarried and partly educated (only the treasurer is in the last year of secondary school). By being illiterate and family conscious, the chair woman had enlisted the help of her husband and son, and made sure that the latter one was elected by the association members as their representative. While the complacent husband is firmly under his wife’s

control and running errands for the association, the greedy son had been running amok, and CARE staff indicated that he was going to be relieved of his responsibilities as the association's representative. With no evidence of regular meetings among neither board members nor members, committees not displaying any activities, results from the poultry unit kept in doors, and association rules seemingly being bent to favour the chair women's family, active involvement and loyalty of members seemed absent resulting in a lot of gossip and dissatisfaction with the leadership and culminating in a bad spell being put on the son of the chair woman. With the board members being empowered, the association members, apart from those gaining some empowerment from attending the literacy class, seem to be disempowered by the autocratic leadership in this association.

In Al Gharbi (village C) the association was run exclusively by the husband of the chair woman, except the literacy classes and the physical tasks needed for running the poultry unit and its limited administration (counting and recording the egg production).

With the chair woman being illiterate, feeling better at home by working in the field and attending literacy class only after 'strong encouragement' of her husband (and failed the test), the impression is gained that she was only elected by the women, in the knowledge that in that case her husband was willing to provide the land for the poultry unit and thus take charge of running the association. The other board members were mostly young and married women with half way through or having completed their secondary education. The committees of this association existed mainly in name.

The chairwoman's husband was elected by the women as their representative and seemingly working to satisfaction of the women as no gossip was recorded. Also CARE staff said to be under the impression that he really wanted to help to make the association a success. Seen his attitude towards his wife and vice-versa combined with the statements of him recorded during the interviews, the team cannot help but feeling, that while paying lip service to women's empowerment, some ulterior motives might play in to this, coupled to a genuine drive of philanthropy to improve the village.

With mainly executing physical chores under instruction of the -himself to the team presenting as benign- representative, neither board members nor members seem to play an independent active role in the association, and empowerment is limited through the educational aspects of the association. Furthermore no evidence of meetings could be recorded and board members and members alike were in the dark about the financial situation of the association and poultry unit; problems are being taken care of by the male representative preferring of course to mainly consult the male CARE staff for that matter.

In comparing Al Qarn with the other two villages it is interesting to note that in Al Qarn the buildings of the association were erected on land not from the board members family, while both in Beit al Humeidah, all physical structures (including the ones from previous projects) and in al Gharbi the poultry unit, had been built on the land of the chair women's family.

The team unanimously rated Al Qarn as the best village concerning empowerment of women, followed by Beit al Humeidah as second and Al Gharbi falling slightly behind.

When being presented with the team's positive comments on their association during the feedback meeting, the Al Qarn women were surprised and beamed with joy and pride, as they thought that their association wasn't performing well at all (because of losing money with the poultry unit).

Comparing the control village

The three villages with associations compare well with the control village when looking at the influence of the associations on empowerment of a number of village women (notably its board members) and by providing literacy classes which enable women to become literate and more empowered, without defying the rules for mobility and honour.

In addition, although there is no substantial evidence, the team was unanimous in their impression that the women in the control village seemed less hopeful and dynamic, and appeared to be feeling more destitute in life and resigned to their situation than the women in the villages with associations.

Research biases, thought to be of influence on the data collection and impeding a sound comparison are:

- The village is situated in the western foothills of Mahwit and has different ecological conditions than the three association villages in the high mountain area around and east of Mahwit.
- The people originated from the Tihama where the people have different characteristics and cultural traditions than those from the 3 villages in the high mountains.
- As questions on the association were not relevant, the interviews had a different, more open character; dwelt longer on issues women came up with themselves or had more attention paid to topics, which in the other three villages could not be brought up or further explored within the time needed to address the 13 evidence categories.

6.1.2. The team

With the research team being fully external to CARE and by the villagers understood as having no direct project involvement with CARE Mahwit, the majority of the respondents concentrated on the team's queries, instead of bringing up project matters. Moreover the team was under the impression that women were less inhibited and probably slightly more critical than when CARE Mahwit staff would have been in the team.

The disadvantages of being external were:

- with having hardly any background information about the activities and approaches of the CARE staff with the establishment and running of the associations and previous interventions for women groups, respondents' (inconsistent or unlikely) information had to be taken at face value and could insufficiently be checked against CARE's information and followed up during the data collection.
- valuable time was needed to become familiar with the village situation, the association's history, organisation, board members, family ties and income generating activities;
- it took extra time and effort to gain trust/credibility with the women and identifying the right key persons.

Invading the village with a team of five members plus the driver especially for more than one day was felt as overpowering, disruptive and costly for the women, some of them rushing off and pulling resources together to provide their guests with breakfast, tea and soft drinks, and other family members were sent off to recall women working in the field to attend the meetings and interviews, work inside and outside the home grinded to a sudden halt.

Because of its large size and avoiding further sacrifices of the women, the team also politely but decisively refused the invitations to lunch, despite that this would limit speeding up the familiarization process, as eating together and dipping of hands in one pot is a sign and confirmation of bonding with your guests, as well as assuring their protection in the Yemeni culture.

With the village women being very gregarious, flocking around and including themselves in small group discussions and individual interviews, the team being large as it was, could spread out and use distraction and separating strategies.

Involving village men with the data collection proved more difficult than expected, as in general men stayed respectfully away from the women's gatherings and the full female team. Moreover, although all team members had consented to participate in men's meetings, only one of them was really at ease and not in a hurry to leave as soon as possible. A male team member would have been helpful, as he could have approached individual men, arranged and attended men's meetings and linked the research activity to the male community.

Although two of the team members had had some exposure to qualitative data collection esp. through participatory methods, none of them had real experience with probing the answers further and following up matters more in-depth. Especially in the first days of data collection, the team members considered their tasks satisfactory completed with just noting down one particular answer to one specific question. A lot of extra, very informal training was given directly after leaving the village while travelling back in the car and during computerizing the data afterwards in the hotel, linking the days' outcome with the direct objective of the research and by practicing to probe deeper into the first answers. With the data progressively turning more in-depth, the team's interest and motivation grew and their insight into women's empowerment indicators underlying the questions improved considerably over the research period.

Seen the above an interesting incident happened when after the data collection, the team leader asked one of its members if she would spend some of her just collected salary for herself and she replied in an almost automatic fashion, she would spend it on her family while the next moment exclaiming 'Oooh', putting her hand to her mouth covering an embarrassing smile, and probably for the first time linking all the questions she had asked on empowerment in the villages, to her own situation.

6.1.3. Methodology

The initial idea of visiting two villages simultaneously with a small sub-team of two members and a shuttling team leader between the sub-teams, was changed into the full team working at the same time in one village, when it turned out that it was impossible to have individual or small group interviews, without many more women from the family or neighbouring houses joining the party. With the full team present, it was possible to entertain and distract larger groups of women or dominating respondents, while one or two team members could steal away and sit somewhere quietly in a corner or outside in the yard with one woman or a small group. Also with the rainy season at full force, road/weather and car conditions, didn't allow for travelling between two villages in one day.

The schedule of data collection in the same village for five consecutive days was changed into five intermittent visits over three weeks, when the team noticed that women started to become less welcoming, expressed through incomprehension, impatience and from hiding away during the team's third visit in a row. With the agricultural season in full swing, besides being always busy with the many household tasks, it is difficult for women to make free time for a number of hours on consecutive days. As the culture dictates to entertain your guests and stay with them as long as they remain in your realm, it is clear that the visits became tiresome and increasingly time consuming, especially for the associations' board members who felt obliged to host the team. Moreover when probing deeper into certain matters discussed so recently the

day before, the women became impatient, bored and even sometimes irritated, saying they had already answered the same-, and for that matter enough questions.

In the course of the data collection it was discovered that by leaving time in between village visits, more familiarity and trust was built and women were pleased to see the team again.

It was however also noticed that with the increase in visit days the expectation of the women and villagers was raising towards possible interventions for the village, despite our careful explanations about the reason for our visits.

Initially the team intended to stay in the villages from morning till late afternoon. However being with a team of five persons + a driver, it decided against staying for lunch in the village, despite the insistent invitations. Hence data collection took place between 9.30 and 13.30 and/or 15.00 and 17.30. In the afternoons the team found that women had more time and were more at ease in spending time with its members; especially as many of the women (especially the older ones) chew qat in the afternoon.

Meeting and interviewing members of the association was much easier, than finding non-members as the board members were much more inclined to gather members and found it strange (also after explanation) why the team wanted to talk with non members and seemed in some cases hesitant and reluctant to invite them or show the way to find them. During the present data collection it was not possible to find out if specific non-member families are 'outsiders' (not on speaking terms with the group or belonging to a group with other/opposing stakes) in the village and were therefore not likely accessible through the introduction or liaison of the association board members. In al Gharbi it was said that all the village women were members, while the chair women of the other two villages said that the majority of the families had at least one woman who was a member.

During the village visits we kept meeting many of the same women. In case the team went to other houses in trying to find non-members, board members and women already interviewed often followed to join the interview and had again to be distracted, to avoid them 'helping' the respondent with the answers or otherwise influence the interview by being within hearing distance.

Interviews and group meetings with men were less than originally intended with the research design, as in three of the four villages most of the men migrated to larger towns for work. The men who were staying in the villages were hardly available, because of the agricultural season. The remaining men took of course no initiative to approach an all female team.

The PRA methods like mind maps and time lines were only possible to use with women being reasonably literate combined with very small groups or individual interviews. With the majority of village women being illiterate or hardly literate, one cannot use written text like key words. Replacing text with drawings, illustrations and photographs is often no solution, as many of the women (esp. the older ones) are also pictorial illiterate.

Women groups grew often too large and chaotic to spread a flip over sheet on the floor; the moment a sheet appeared in front of a small group, women and esp. children came flocking in, pushing each other away to see what was going on. Children would crawl over the sheets, appropriating illustrations or masking tape, with toddlers happily sucking the felt pens. With men who in general have better literacy skills and are more disciplined and orderly in group meetings, like the qat chews (no children present!) these methods have proven to be better feasible and effective.

Feedback meetings were very effective both for the team and the respondents. It gave the chance for the team to check the findings, while the women got feedback and an overview of the data they had provided for the first time in their lives⁶. The meetings generated a lot of interest, increased involvement and more in-depth discussion than during the small group interviews, resulting in better substantiated findings.

Despite the team's efforts to include all 13 core evidence categories in the semi-structured interviews, these were clearly too many to address, which negatively affected the consistency of the data collected as well as the possibilities for extensive in-depth probing per category.

6.1.4. Analysis

As with the progressing of the data collection, the team members worked in teams of 2 or increasingly individually, every field day resulted in often 6 specific interviews and additional data from group discussions. With notes taken while interviewing and many data mentally recorded by the 5 team members, it was important to immediately process and computerize these at the end of the same day.

This proved to be a very intense and lengthy exercise, as notes were taken in Arabic and had to be translated during the reporting and computerization. With having no extra time planned for this in the data collection schedule combined with the fact that only one team member was fluent in English, it became a highly strenuous process often stretching deep into the night and filling up the weekends. Insufficient time was left to go over the data, to detect inconsistencies and other matters which could then have been followed up during the next village visit.

With the few days left (and needed for further editing of the collected village data and 60 interviews) between the end of the data collection and start of the analysis workshop, there was neither time nor mental space left to sufficiently reflect on the approach to take during the analysis workshop.

Within one week after the end of the data collection a two-day analysis workshop was held for a first analysis of the data. Apart from yielding 45 indicators of empowerment for disaggregating the interviews and a list with preliminary conclusions, the workshop proved especially valuable to inform participating CARE staff about the many findings from the interviews. In particular the 2 members of the CARE Mahwit office said to be very impressed by the data, as many for them new information about the associations and its members had been brought to light, which was said to be essential for their programmes and activities.

6.2. CARE's ways of working

As the research assignment dealt exclusively with identifying the impact of CARE's women's association on empowerment of women, the team did not assess CARE's approaches and projects activities as such. However during collecting the village data the team needed to verify their findings and compare certain statements from the respondents directly related to CARE's activities with the associations in the villages. With the dedicated and hard working Mahwit staff being daily out on village visits themselves, it was only possible to meet with part of the staff at the end of the village data collection. From this meeting the following was learned:

⁶ From the numerous surveys held in Yemen, it is far from common practice that results are communicated back to the respondents.

By having to establish a minimum of 10 associations at the end of the year, the staff concentrates mainly on support with official registration, physical infrastructure (literacy building and poultry unit) and implementing the training courses. Within the year of CARE assisting the association, there is insufficient time left to guide the association board members (other than giving brief instructions during village visits), detect specific problems and its causes with running the associations or to collect sufficient information on the financial operations by i.e. checking the bank accounts against the associations' books. The present financial non-transparency in at least two of the three researched villages is a reason for concern as it might easily lead towards malpractice and result in collapsing of the association. The team got the impression that these days quantity takes precedence over quality of CARE staffs' inputs.

The impression is gained that CARE staff has more a mode of instructing the association members with the establishment and running of the association and its activities and solving problems, than discussing and guiding the members to explore the options open to them and take decisions themselves.

CARE female staff reported that increasingly their ideas are accepted by the male staff and these days they even feel confident to challenge the planning of work made up by their male supervisor during the monthly meetings. However when going together with male staff on village visits because of the limited number of cars and men taking priority in use cars, the female staff has to rush through their programme with the women as the male staff often finishes before them, or in case of male staff chewing qat, the women have to wait and arrive back home after dark, being frowned upon by their neighbours.

The female staff further mentioned that they liked the transparency in the organisation and that since working with CARE their skills had improved and they had become more ambitious in life.

It was noted that especially female staff when advising the associations would only change the instructions, -even when already very obvious to accommodate the changing circumstances-, after having asked permission to do so from their male staff members, while the men change mostly their advice on their own account and probably on the spot itself.

This also means that from the CARE side too, men do influence the association's operations.

Although this might seem not in agreement with the earlier made statement (under 6.1.1.) arguing that male CARE staff was not overly keen to deal with 'women's issues', men have less problems with involving themselves, especially mentally (as opposed to physically) and in cases it reinforces their status and power as managers and senior office staff. Without sufficiently changed attitudes towards empowerment and gender equity, the danger exist that they might unwittingly impose and secure inequity and disempowerment in the women's projects.

In case of long standing contacts between CARE and project villages (like with Beit al Humeidah since 2000), with the CARE staff understandingly and justly feeling pride and ownership with their achievements and the carefully constructed and maintained relationships, the team wonders about risks with becoming less critical to the development of certain machinations within the projects.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Further research

For further and similar research it is recommended to have a team of maximal 4 members, including one male person, as this will still allow for having small group and individual interviews through spreading out and distraction tactics, while at the same time involving male respondents.

Instead of visiting one village for a consecutive number of days, data collection over a longer period with intermittent visits is recommended as it is less time consuming for the village women and trust building is enhanced through its gradual process. The team will have more time to process and analyse the data during its collection needed for following up inconsistencies and inconclusive answers.

In case with future research being undertaken by CARE through an external team, extra time should be included to familiarize with the CARE field staff and vice versa, so as to get their full support and relevant information about the selected villages; e.g. through accompanying the CARE staff for a number of days on their village visits and field work. This will also provide insight on CARE's activities, approaches and methods used with the implementation of projects and specific training needs of staff could be identified.

Seen the number of inconclusive findings, future research could include:

- Reasons for decrease of participants to the literacy class
- Possible increase of workload for family members of association board members and participants to the literacy course.
- Are all aspects of increase in empowerment e.g. by board members perceived as positive by the village community?
- What are reasons for non-membership, are there underlying exclusion strategies?
- Women's views on CARE's interventions and approaches.

7.2 Improving associations and CARE's ways of working

Interest and commitment of its members and consequently the sustainability of the association will be enhanced with an open information structure of the association, especially concerning its finances, but also concerning aims and objectives and roles and responsibilities of its board members.

Involvement of men especially when dominating the associations operations, should be reduced or avoided, which will be possible by increasing the managerial, administrative and financial capabilities of the board members. With training of management and administration skills, extra attention should be paid to cost-benefit calculations.

Despite the success of the first years' literacy beginners course, participant numbers dropped in two villages with the second beginners course and it is recommended here to follow up its reasons more in-depth. In case the dwindling numbers indicate that the village is running out of women interested in becoming literate, CARE could further train the literacy teachers and assist the association with setting up a follow up course, as many participants of the first course expressed a keen interest in continuing to develop their newly acquired literacy skills. With hardly any suitable reading material available in the village to exercise and sustain the literacy skills, CARE could help the associations by collecting books and magazines through

e.g. donor organisations or as second-hand through charity organisation in the larger cities. Furthermore ministries like health, agriculture etc. should be encouraged to distribute their available and often dust collecting extension leaflets.

As already health matters are being discussed in the literacy classes, it is suggested here to include some carefully selected issues on family planning in the curriculum, through providing the literacy teachers with information on these matters.

It is recommended here to allow for more training and longer financial support with income generating activities, so women can learn from their mistakes and acquire the necessary experience and skills without going bankrupt in the first year of running this new activity.

When training board members in specific skills, like e.g. poultry keeping, the usefulness of the association for its members could be increased when with the on-the- job and in-village training of e.g. poultry supervisors, interested members would be invited to participate.

Through exchange visits between the associations, board members could learn from each others' experiences, discuss their various levels of empowerment and feel encouraged by the possibilities to further enhance this.

CARE staff should be trained in participatory learning and decision making techniques and its differences with instruction techniques.

In order to make CARE's male and female office staff more gender conscious it is suggested to organise a participatory learning workshop to increase their awareness on the present attitudes and behaviours and discuss where and how to remedy the situation.

To enhance openness and effectiveness, it should be considered to discuss gender and sex related sensitive topics in male and female segregated groups, before discussing these topics with a mixed audience.

With income generating activities involving livestock, CARE should avoid promoting techniques from the bio industry detrimental to the well-being of animals.

When designing and implementing income generating activities involving livestock, CARE should include expertise from animal husbandry specialists, as with the advice from veterinarians the focus lies mainly on curative and costly measures, which in many cases can be avoided through simple preventive practices.

Seen the far from ergonomically appropriate as well as the deplorable state of almost all the tools the women use in agriculture and of many of the appliances at home, negatively affecting women's labour, time and health, CARE could consider to design a (income generating) programme on labour reduction and time saving tools/appliances and their maintenance.