Listening to the stories of women in the South African rural water services sector to understand how their traditional roles intersect with government gender mainstreaming initiatives

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March 2008
DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it to any university for a degree.

Signature: _______________________________ Date: 18 February 2008

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ABSTRACT

Cultural dynamics bring an added dimension to development projects. The Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) recognizes the need to engage with power relations at different levels between men and women, and that traditional beliefs and practices are important here. However, the most recent strategy of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) fails to address the impact of cultural dynamics on gender mainstreaming. This study was conducted to increase the understanding of how this might be dealt with.

To yield personal information on how individuals are affected by traditional culture, narratology was used. Five women were engaged in three in-depth interviews of approximately two hours each. The purpose was to discuss their life stories and their involvement in the water projects, and then to integrate the life stories with the projects to highlight complexities around specific roles such as that of daughter, wife and development facilitator. The researcher therefore conducted the study from the point of view of the women, rather than from the traditional perspective of the development practitioner or government official.

The empirical results were related to literature reviewed on topics such as complexity, feminism and sustainability. Thus, it was possible to highlight underlying complexities related to culture that might impact on gender mainstreaming in the following areas:

1. Women’s time and labour
2. Women’s power within African societies
3. The Butterfly effect in women’s lives
4. Fundamental human desires in women’s lives
5. Utilising social capital
6. The approach of funding and donor organizations
7. Society as a complex system
8. The effects of migration on women’s lives
Some aspects highlighted by the study are the following. Development and funding organizations often use a one-size-fits-all individualistic approach whereas the societies they work in have a more collective mindset. Furthermore, women's time and labour are exploited by the developmental organizations as rural women offer their services voluntarily. And in African society mothering boys is a source of power for women, which influences resource allocation.

In terms of a recommended approach to addressing the impact of traditional culture on gender mainstreaming, it was found that a practitioner does not have to tackle traditional culture head-on by for instance proposing defiance against certain norms. Rather, the practitioner should obtain information about the wider system (the society, the prevailing culture and the project context) to provide insight into how women are affected and how the system might be manipulated to eventually bring about the desired changes for the specific context. The processes of change in culture and gender relations must be viewed as on-going and exact time-frames are usually not appropriate in measuring such.

As the study emphasized the importance of both men and women working together on projects, a limitation of the current study is that it focused only on the stories of women. A follow-up study should include the views and stories of how gender mainstreaming and traditional culture impact on men.
OPSOMMING

Kulturele dinamiek voeg 'n verdere dimensie tot ontwikkelingsprojekte toe. Die Departement van Provinsiale en Plaaslike Bestuur erken dat dit nodig is om magsverhoudings op verskillende vlakke tussen mans en vrouens aan te spreek, en dat tradisionele geloof en gebruik in die verband belangrik is. Ten spyte hiervan, spreek die mees onlangse strategie van die Department van Waterwese en Bosbou nie die impak van kultuurdinamiek op die hoofstrooming van geslagsrolgelykheid aan nie. Hierdie studie is uitgevoer om groter insig te verkry in hoe dit gedoen sou kon word.

Ten einde persoonlike inligting oor die impak van tradisionele kultuur op die individu te bekom, is 'n storieverteltegniek gebruik. Drie in-diepe onderhoude van ongeveer twee ure elk is met vyf vrouens gevoer. Die doel was om hulle lewensverhale en hulle betrokkenheid by die waterprojekte te bespreek, en dan om die lewensverhale met die projekte te integreer om sodoende kompleksiteit rondom spesifieke rolverdelings soos byvoorbeeld die van dogter, eggenote en ontwikkelingsfasiliteerder te ondersoek. Die navorser het die studie dus uitgevoer vanuit die perspektief van die vrouens, en nie vanuit die tradisionele perspektief van die ontwikkelingswerker of die regeringsamptenaar nie.

Die empiriese resultate is in verband gebring met literatuur rakende onderwerpe soos kompleksiteitsteorie, feminisme en volhoubare ontwikkeling. Op hierdie manier was dit moontlik om die onderliggende kompleksiteit rakende kultuur wat 'n impak op die hoofstrooming van geslagsrolgelykheid mag hê, in die volgende areas uit te lig:

(1) Vrouens se tyd en arbeid
(2) Vrouens se mag binne Afrika-gemeenskappe
(3) Die vlindereffek in vrouens se lewens
(4) Basiese menslike begeertes in vrouens se lewens
(5) Die aanwending van sosiale kapitaal
(6) Die aanslag van bevondsings- en skenkersorganisasies
(7) Die samelewing as ’n komplekse sisteem
(8) Die invloed van migrasie op vrouens se lewens

Die studie het ondermeer die volgende aspekte uitgelig. Ontwikkelings- en skenkerorganisasies gebruik dikwels ’n eenvormige individualistiese aanslag, terwyl die gemeenskappe waar hulle werk ’n meer kollektiewe gerigtheid het. Verder, vrouens se tyd en arbeid word deur ontwikkelingsorganisasies uitgebuit aangesien landelike vrouens hulle dienste teen geen vergoeding aanbied. In Afrika-gemeenskappe is moederskap van seuns ’n bron van mag vir vroue wat dan ook die toewysing van hulpbronne beïnvloed.

Rakende ’n aanbevole aanslag tot die aanspreek van die impak van tradisionele kultuur op die hoofstroming van geslagsrolgelykheid is daar gevind dat dit nie nodig vir die ontwikkelingswerker is om kultuur tromp-op te loop deur byvoorbeeld die miskenning van sekere praktye aan te moedig nie. Die ontwikkelingswerker behoort eerder inligting rakende die totale sisteem (die gemeenskap, die heersende kultuur en die projekkonteks) te bekom ten einde insig te verkry in hoe die vrouens geraak word en hoe die sisteem gemanipuleer kan word ten einde uiteindelik die nodige veranderinge vir die spesifieke konteks te weeg te bring. Die veranderingsprosesse in beide kultuur- en geslagsrolverhoudinge moet as aangaande beskou word en eksakte tydsraamwerke is nie van pas om vordering te meet nie.

Aangesien hierdie studie die belangrikheid daarvan beklemtoon het dat mans en vrouens op projekte moet saamwerk, is die feit dat die huidige studie net op die stories van vrouense gefokus het, ’n beperking. Oppvolgstudies behoort dus die sienings en stories van mans oor hoe hulle deur die hoofstroming van geslagsrolgelykheid en tradisionele kultuur beïnvloed word, aan te spreek.
DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this thesis to the women who inspired and continue to inspire me in doing this research study, my dearest mother, aunts, grand-mothers, sisters, cousins, friends and those rural women whose resilience is a source of inspiration.

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Lastly, I would like thank my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for my life, He is worth the praise!
### ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGS</td>
<td>Council for Geoscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHDM</td>
<td>Chris Hani District Municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Cape Provincial Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSPC</td>
<td>Community Service Providers Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DALA</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEAT</td>
<td>Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>United Kingdom Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPLG</td>
<td>Department of Provincial and Local Government</td>
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<td>DWAF</td>
<td>Department of Water Affairs and Forestry</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELMC</td>
<td>Engcobo Local Municipality Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAD</td>
<td>Gender and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>GM</td>
<td>Gender Mainstreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPFLG</td>
<td>Gender Policy Framework for Local Government</td>
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<td>GWTF</td>
<td>Gender and Water Task Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Integrated Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IES</td>
<td>Integrated Ecological Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGWM</td>
<td>Mainstreaming Gender for Water Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGWSS</td>
<td>Mainstreaming Gender in the Water Services Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NISAP</td>
<td>National Implementation Strategy and Action Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRHI</td>
<td>National Rural Health Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>Public Rural Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUTCO</td>
<td>Public Utility Transport Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSA</td>
<td>Republic of South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAHDR</td>
<td>South African Human Development Report</td>
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<td>TO</td>
<td>Technical Operator</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIP</td>
<td>Ventilation Improved Pit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VWC</td>
<td>Village Working Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WID</td>
<td>Women and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>WRC</td>
<td>Water Research Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSDP</td>
<td>Water Services Development Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>WWF-4</td>
<td>Fourth World Water Forum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opsomming</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication and acknowledgements</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of acronyms and abbreviations</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annexures</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables and Figures</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Motivation for the research  
1.2 Problem statement and research questions  
1.3 The research methodology and process  
1.4 Tasks carried out as part of the research process  
1.5 Dealing with ethical aspects  
1.6 Outline of the remainder of thesis

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to the literature review and definition of key concepts  
2.2 Paradigms for addressing the issue of gender in development projects  
2.2.1 Gender and gender relations  
2.2.2 Development of different paradigms  
2.3 Sustainable development  
2.4 Gender and social capital  
2.5 The concept of power and society  
2.6 Feminism  
2.6.1 Liberal feminism  
2.6.2 Marxist feminism  
2.6.3 African feminism  
2.7 Complexity theory  
2.7.1 Applications of chaos theory in social organizations  
2.7.2 Complexity at the edge of chaos  
2.7.3 Characteristics of a complex system
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.7.4 Principles of attraction and fractality</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.5 Human complexity</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.6 Social complexity</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7.7 The implications of complexity for culture</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Chapter Summary</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Research design: Sample for data collection and sampling technique</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Methods of data collection</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Study site and research participant selection</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1 Ethical aspects of the research</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Validity and reliability</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Reflectivity</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Data analysis</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Shortcomings and sources of error</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9 Chapter Summary</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY AREA</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introduction</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Geographical location</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Socio-economic characteristics</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 Engcobo Local Municipality</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2 Summary of the socio-economic information for the three villages where the interviews took place</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Information on cultural traditions</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1 Traditional leadership structure of AmaXhosa society</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2 The custom of lobola</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.3 Religion and spirituality</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Leadership structures in the villages and on the projects</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Chapter Summary</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.4.3 The role of small causes in women’s lives (the Butterfly effect) 141
7.4.4 The role of fundamental human desires in the women's lives 141
7.4.5 Utilising social capital on projects 141
7.4.6 The role of funding and donor organizations 142
7.4.7 Society as a complex system 143
7.4.8 The effects of migration on the women’s lives 143
7.5 Limitations and recommendations for further research 144
7.6 Implications of the research project 144
7.7 Implication of the research on policy 145

8 REFERENCES 147

Annexure A: Graphs and tables of socio-economic information for the Engcobo Local Municipality 155
Annexure B: Graphs and tables of socio-economic information for the villages visited 159

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1: Age-sex distribution of the total population 53
Figure 2: ELM Income Distribution 55
Figure 3: Access to sanitation facilities for the ELM 56
Figure 4: Access to water services infrastructure for the ELM 57
Figure 5: Illustration of the concept of fractals across the different sphere’s of the women’s adult lives 116
Table 1: Education profile for the ELM 56
1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Motivation for the research

Mahatma Gandhi said that: “Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need, but not every man’s greed” (Greening planet, 2006:1). The vulnerable groups within society are often excluded from accessing essential services such as health, education, water and sanitation by being discriminated against. This discrimination takes place on the basis of age, gender, caste, descent, ethnic background, disability, religion, sexual orientation, social status, and HIV/AIDS or any other health status, as well as spatial orientation (DFID, 2005:3).

In the water services sector, where the focus is the supply of water and sanitation services, there are also excluded groups that cannot access the basic level of service they need. Water is necessary to sustain life and ecologies, drive economies and industries, and ensure food security and health. Sanitation is needed to protect health and ensure dignity. The most vulnerable groups in society, namely women and children often lack access to water of adequate quality and quantity, be it for drinking or productive purposes (Schreiner, 2001:1), as well as access to basic sanitation services. More than 2.2 million people die each year in developing countries from diseases associated with lack of access to safe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene (GWTF, 2005:4). As a result, the management of water services to ensure equitable access involves addressing gender issues, among other factors.

Gender is a social, rather than a biological construct that revolves around relations, in particular power relations. These relations define social functioning on the basis of sex, and often these relations are oppressive to women (Schreiner, 2001:2). This is in direct contrast with the South African Constitution’s equality clause which states that: the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, sexual orientation, colour, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: Chapter 2, Section 9.3).
Furthermore, when the accessibility to the water services of a significant proportion of a society’s members is restricted, this also impedes sustainable development. The reason for this is that the water services play a role in health, food security, economic production and ecosystem functioning (GPFLG, 2005:4 and WWF-4, 2005: 2). This fact can be illustrated by considering the impact of access to water and sanitation on the various Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

For instance, with reference to MDG 1 (Reduction of extreme poverty and hunger), water plays an important role in food security and poverty alleviation. With reference to MDG 4 (Reduction of child mortality), access to clean water is related to the reduction of water-borne diseases, while a lack of access to sanitation causes illnesses such as cholera. According to Aureli and Brelet (2004:2) “water, sanitation and hygiene interventions could reduce ..... child deaths under the age of five in developing countries by one-quarter to one-third”.

In addressing gender inequality in the water services sector, both the practical needs and strategic needs of women have to be addressed. In terms of the practical needs, women need access to basic services to ensure the functioning of the family unit and to sustain a minimum quality of life. In terms of the strategic needs of women, the barriers that prevent women and men from operating at the same level, need to be removed and women need to be empowered to enjoy the same status as men to realize their full potential to contribute to national, political, social and cultural development (Schreiner, 2001:2).

In line with the importance of equitable access to the water services, as illustrated above, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) recently revised their gender mainstreaming policy (DWAF, 2005). In devising and implementing a gender mainstreaming policy, it is important to recognize that both men and women are not homogenous categories, and that a “one-size-fits-all’ policy will not be effective unless it recognizes and engages with difference related to for instance privilege, class, race, wealth and religion. This applies also in monoculture societies. Furthermore, it is a fact
that cultural dynamics are different from place to place. Research has shown that these cultural dynamics have a significant impact on gender roles which in turn has an impact on development initiatives (Reeves and Baden, 2000:4).

Despite the impact of cultural dynamics on gender mainstreaming on water services projects, the DWAF gender mainstreaming policy does not address cultural dynamics. This results in practitioners finding themselves managing events such as Women’s Day rather than a transformation process aimed at societal transformation (MGWSS, 2005: 10).

Culture is learned and such learning does not take place through natural inheritance nor is it genetically transmitted. Rather it is a process of absorption from the social environment or through deliberate instruction. Each culture has its own personality and like the cells in the human body culture is always subject to transformation and is therefore in a continuous process of change (Gray, 2003:12). In spite of this change, culture continues to give a community a sense of identity, dignity, continuity, security and societal bonds (Muyale-Manenji, 1998:1). Culture¹ has an impact on all sectors of human life, and is therefore important in defining quality of life. Values, norms and artifacts (material means) define the cultural identity of a society (Muyale-Manenji, 1998:1 and (Reeves and Baden, 2000:4).

Cultural dynamics bring an added dimension to development projects in general. For instance, the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) gender policy (GPFLG, 2005:5) recognizes the presence of power relations at different levels as a challenge to equality and development. Implicitly, it admits the success of dealing with power relations to be dependent on “understanding power relations between women and men in relation to beliefs, ideas and practices” (GPFLG, 2005:5).

¹ The term “traditional culture” can mean different things to different people. Here the term is used to refer to gender-restrictive values and practices that characterize certain rural and traditional African communities. However, it is conceded that such traditional culture is influenced by the mass media, modern technology and other cultures and that no society is isolated today, and therefore no culture “pure” any longer.
Culture and tradition can enable or obstruct, and can be oppressive or liberating for different people at different times. According to Jolly (2002:2) there is nothing sacred about culture, and value judgments have to be made about which aspect of culture to hold on to, and which aspect to let go of. Furthermore, culture is not frozen or stagnant and is often “explicitly or implicitly reshaped because it is enmeshed in the turbulences of history” (Jolly, 2002:8).

For gender-mainstreamed water services projects to successfully negotiate the complexities of cultural dynamics, it is important to unpack the different roles of men and women, and the relationships between these roles within the various strata of society. In particular, there has to be an understanding of how cultural dynamics impact on these roles and relations. Such and understanding will make it possible for policy to engage in a constructive manner with the situation on the ground and to facilitate addressing not only the practical needs, but also the strategic needs of women in terms of equal participation in decision-making and equal access to the benefits of water.

The reason for undertaking this study is to illuminate the complexity that exists between cultural dynamics and gender mainstreaming in the water services sector, and to create a better understanding of how to engage with this complexity in a transformative manner.

1.2 Problem statement and research questions

Water service projects implemented in accordance with general gender mainstreaming guidelines do not deliver optimal results in terms of empowering women and reducing poverty (DFID, 2005:1 and Rees, 2002:13). Among several reasons for this, is the failure to understand the impact of culturally imposed roles on women and to engage with these appropriately when gender mainstreaming of water services projects is conducted. This is the basic problem to be addressed in this research project.
Although some researchers have put forward guidelines on how to deal with traditional culture in development projects (Maharaj, 2003), these guidelines are often prescriptions generated outside the communities (an outside-inward viewpoint). This study is aimed at creating understanding of how to engage with traditional culture on water services projects, by adopting an inward-outward viewpoint.

It is believed that looking through the lenses of the stories of individual women in the water services projects, and in particular with regard to their different roles (such as within the family, the community, and the water projects), will deepen the understanding of how practitioners might engage with traditional culture in gender mainstreaming of water services projects.

Accordingly, the following research questions have been defined:

- How do cultural dynamics interact with the various roles of women in the family, the community and the water services project?
- How can an improved understanding of the above interactions be utilized by project practitioners on water services projects to engage with the possible negative impacts of traditional culture?

1.3 The research methodology and process

Telling stories is a pervasive aspect of our environment that is often essential in providing the initial and continuing means for shaping our experiences. This means that without stories our experiences would merely be unevaluated sensations from an undifferentiated stream of events. Stories are the repository of our collective wisdom about the world of cultural and socio-cultural behaviour, and stories are therefore the mediating structures of our encounter with reality (Eric Digest, 2006).

The simplest reason why we tell stories is given by Brodkey and Fine 1991 who said we commonly tell stories about what happens to us and about what we make of our
experience. In a sense, then, the stories documenting our lives tell what we find worth remembering, contemplating and sharing with others.

Therefore, narratology has been chosen as the methodology for the study. Narratology is a technique that would yield personal information on how an individual is affected by cultural dynamics. The words “story” and “narrate” can be traced to the word or act of knowing as it is through stories that people come to know. It is through the construction and maintenance of their knowledge of the world in the form of a story that an individual creates meaning of daily happenings. The story will serve as a basis for the individual’s anticipation of future events (Eric Digest, 2006).

The research process was to interview five women involved in the water services sector about their lives, their roles within their families, communities and the water services projects. Three in-depth taped interviews of two-three hours were conducted with each woman. These interviews were structured as follows:

- Interview 1: Her life story;
- Interview 2: The story of her involvement in the water project, and then
- Interview 3: Retracing the life story and involvement in the project to ask more complex questions about experiences within particular roles – as a girl, as a daughter, as a mother, as a wife, as a woman in the community, as a participant in the development process.

Based upon a literature review of relevant topics, the stories of the women were analyzed to increase the understanding of the impact of cultural dynamics on their lives and therefore on gender mainstreaming in the water services sector. This increased understanding will lead to the identification of ways in which implementing agents and consultants can gender mainstream water services projects in areas where traditional culture has a strong influence.
1.4 Tasks carried out as part of the research project

To answer the research questions, the following tasks were carried out:

- Literature review
- Design of fieldwork component of the project
- Analyzing the socio-economic characteristics of the study area
- Testing of the interview technique on one respondent in the Mpumalanga Province, where after the technique was refined
- Conducting the interviews to record the stories of the women
- Analyzing the data
- Writing the report

1.5 Dealing with ethical aspects

One of the most important concerns in the data collection phase of qualitative research processes, is that of ethics. This involves aspects such as the proper explanation of the aims and objectives of the research project, as well of the interviewee’s right to refuse to respond to questions that might offend them. It is also important to protect the right of interviewees’ to their privacy, for instance in terms of not providing their real names. In the thesis, the women’s names were changed to protect their privacy.

In this particular research project, the fact that the women were being interviewed by a man was also handled with sensitivity. The researcher used his own experience of growing up with a single mother to put the interviewees at ease and to ensure them that he, as a man, has significant respect for women. At the end of each interview women were asked about their experience of the whole exercise and the fact that the interviewer was a man. Not one of the women indicated that the fact that the interviewer was a man made them uncomfortable.
1.6 Outline of the remainder of thesis

Chapter 2 of this thesis is devoted to a literature survey of various aspects related to the topic, such as how gender is dealt with in development, sustainable development and feminism, as well as culture and complexity theory. Thereafter, the socio-economic analysis of the area in which the data was collected is presented in Chapter 3, along with a description of how the projects that were surveyed are constructed and managed. Chapter 4 contains the stories of the women interviewed. Chapter 5 is devoted to making the connections between the literature, the stories of women and strategies to address the impact of traditional culture on water services projects. The recommendations for addressing the impact of traditional cultural dynamics on gender-mainstreamed water services projects are contained in Chapter 6, which concludes the thesis.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to the literature review and definition of key concepts

In this chapter, the literature and theoretical framework that inform the study are reviewed and the key concepts used are defined. In the literature review various aspects related to women and development projects are investigated. In the first place, the general paradigms for addressing the needs of women on development projects are discussed. The need for sustainable development and the roles of women in that regard are discussed next, with specific reference to social capital. Next, the discussion moves to a discussion of African feminism, and literature specifically relating to issues of traditional culture. The following topic of the literature review is that of complexity theory - in particular as a possible framework for engaging with traditional culture on water services projects. The literature review concludes with a discussion of culture from a complexity perspective.

Although each of these topics are discussed under a separate heading, these topics are complexly interlinked. Where appropriate, these linkages will be deconstructed.

Before the literature reviewed is presented, the key concepts used in this thesis are defined below.

**Culture:** Culture is a dynamic process of learning that does not result from natural inheritance but is a process that involves the absorption and transmission of information from the social environment or through deliberate instruction (Gray, 2003:12).

**Complexity theory:** Complexity theory emanates from diverse disciplines that help in the understanding the roles of connection and interactions between systems that form the wholes, and through the concepts of emergent orders, self-organization and non-linearity, the understanding of the intricacies is expanded (Lacayo, 2007:1).
**Sustainable Development:** Sustainable development means the integration of social, economic and environmental factors into planning, implementation and decision-making so as to ensure that development serves present and future generations (DEAT, 2006).

**Social Capital:** Social capital is the measure of the intangible asserts of a community such as networks, cultural pursuits and trust, which are based on shared values that allow the citizenry room to participate fully in community processes toward a future that aims to benefit all (Beeton, 2006:4; De Beer and Swanepoel, 2000:105, Lichtman, 2003:27).

**Gender:** Refers to the different roles, rights and responsibilities of men and women and the relationship between them. The term also refers to women and men’s behavior, qualities and identities that determine the access to resources, choices and power etc. These roles are influenced by historical, religious, economic and cultural realities (UNDP MGWM, 2006:10) and are thus social constructs, rather than biologically determined.

**Gender mainstreaming:** This is a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, and programs in all areas and at all levels (UNDP MGWM, 2006:9).

**Feminism:** Is an awareness of oppression, exploitation and/or subordination of women within society and the conscious action to change and transform this situation (Msimang, 2002:7).
2.2 Paradigms for addressing the issue of gender in development projects

2.2.1 Gender and gender relations

Gender refers to the specific roles, rights and responsibilities adopted by women and men in a society in relation to each other (Maharaj, 2003:5; UNDP-MGWM, 2006:10; and GPFLG, 2005:5). According to Coates (1999:2), people are born males and females but are taught and learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. Therefore, females and males are taught what the appropriate behavior and attitudes, roles and activities are for them and how they should relate to other people in a society (Coates, 1999:2).

In many instances society determines how women’s and men’s qualities, behaviors and identities should be. This results in how women and men are perceived, and are expected to think and act in society (Maharaj, 2003:10 and UNDP-MGWM, 2006:10). Women and men are thus expected to fulfill a number of social roles within a number of social relations that are influenced by other people (Coates, 1999:2).

The concept of gender is generally associated with unequal power and access to choices and resources. This distribution of power and access to resources is determined by the positions women and men have in society. Positions are influenced by aspects that are subject to change over time and are in the form of historical, religious, economic and cultural factors (UNDP-MGWM, 2006:10, GPFLG, 2005:5).

Women and men are defined in different ways in different societies and therefore relate to each other differently to constitute what is known as “gender relations”. Gender relations are the hierarchal relations of power between women and men that tend to disadvantage women (UNDP-MGWM, 2006:10). The societies often accept these hierarchies as natural and these socially determined relations are culturally ingrained and subject to change over time. Hence, gender relations constitute and are
constructed by a range of institutions such as the family and legal and institutional systems (UNDP-MGWM, 2006:10).

In order to ensure equity, it is thus essential in development processes that gender analysis be done to expose the impacts of development on both women and men. This auditing process separates data by sex and would for instance present information on work allocation focusing on all the project stages. The aim is to inform the planning and decision making processes of how both men and women are being affected (Reeves and Baden, 2000:6; UNDP-MGWM, 2006:11).

2.2.2 Development of different paradigms for engaging with gender

*Women in Development (WID)*

The Women in Development (WID) perspective evolved in the early 1970s from a liberal feminism framework and it influenced policies that addressed the needs of poor women in the context of their role as women and mothers (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33; UNDP-MGWM, 2006:11). This was a “welfare approach” as it focused on the health and nutrition of women and children. Technically, it highlighted the need for women to be integrated into development processes. Hence, women’s productive contribution was made visible, although their reproductive role was downplayed (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33).

Women’s subordination was seen in terms of their exclusion from the market sphere, limited access to and control over resources. Programs informed by the WID approach addressed women’s needs by, for example creating employment and income generating opportunities; improving their access to credit and to education (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33). Although many WID projects improved health, income, or resources in the short term, they did not transform unequal relationships and a significant number were not sustainable (UNDP-MGWM, 2006:11). A shortcoming of the WID approach
was the insufficient participation of women in the development processes and the failure to address the broader gender inequalities within the society (Reeves and Baden, 2000:33). The WID approach failed to address the systemic causes of gender inequalities (Morna, 2000:5). The WID approach was furthermore also applied as a welfare approach which viewed women as passive recipients of development assistance (UNDP GMWM, 2003:8).

**Gender and Development (GAD)**

In response to the failures of the WID approach to transform the social, economical, political and cultural realities of women, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach emerged in the late 1980s. The GAD approach was aimed at challenging socially constructed gender roles and relations which often resulted in disparities in the social, economic, and political balances between women and men. The GAD approach perceived the underlying unequal power relations between men and women to be a hindrance to the achievement of equity and sustainable development (Ahmed, 2002:9). This meant that the general focus of the GAD approaches was to meet both the women’s practical and strategic gender needs, whereas the focus of the WID approach was more on the practical needs of women.

According to Ahmed (2002:10) practical needs mostly relate to women’s living conditions and resources. These can readily be identified and relate to aspects such as food, water and income. The practical needs can be addressed over time through the WID approach.

Strategic gender needs, however, are the needs women identify with because of their subordination to men in society. They relate to gendered divisions of labor, power and control including issues such as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages and women’s control over their bodies (Ahmed, 2002:10).
According to Ahmed (2002:13) the GAD approach stresses social benefits rather than economic solutions to development. The GAD approach recognized the need for the improvement of the status of women through equity and efficiency. It further challenged women’s subordinate position and attempted to increase women’s participation in development projects, such as water supply and sanitation (Morna, 2000:5). Similar to or derived from the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) concept, the GAD approach aimed to ensure that the voices and views of stakeholders in the society are brought into the processes (Akerkar, 2001:3).

One of the reasons for the failure of the GAD approach was because it emphasized the tools and frameworks for addressing gender sensitive data, and concentrated on practical projects and policies, implying a faith in techniques to address the various forms of prejudice that exist. These prejudices were and still are embedded in the organizational systems and work culture. According to Akerkar (2001:3) the framing of gender as a technical issue underestimates the role of aspects such as discriminatory gendered incentive systems and accountability structures. As a result, a change to more equal gender relations remains an elusive goal, in spite of the incorporation of a gender analysis framework into the projects and programmes (Akerkar, 2001:3).

**Gender mainstreaming (GM)**

Gender mainstreaming (GM) emerged through the United Nation’s Development Program (UNDP) as a means of addressing gender imbalances and furthering the empowermen of women. The GM approach is aimed at a more equal control of resources and sharing of water-related work burdens between men and women (UNDP MGWM, 2003:8). Gender mainstreaming should reinforce, reflect and create awareness of policies, planning, procedures, implementation and evaluation (DWAF, NISAP, 2003:4).
Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implication for both men and women of any planned action including legislation, policies and programs in all areas and at all levels (UNDP-MGWM, 2006:9). GM is focused on the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs that seek to ensure equity and equality between men and women in the political, economic and societal spheres (Maharaj, 2003:6).

_Eco-feminism_

In response to the often negative impact of development projects on women’s lives, the eco-feminism paradigm emerged.

“Eco-feminism rejects the dominance, competition, materialism, and technoscientific exploitation inherent in modernist, competition-based social systems. Eco-feminism instead assumes that healthy interactions are based on caring and compassion and the creation and nurturing of life … compassion and caring for nature are part of eco-feminist processes because all of nature is seen as intimately connected with humans and as having inherent value. Nature has an existence and voice worth hearing and experiencing. Eco-feminism reflects critically upon the woman-nature connection which is grounded in the ties of body, spirituality, fertility and female reproduction” (Stephen, 2006: 10).

Although there are numerous theories about eco-feminism, eco-feminism basically seeks to remind humanity that we are an integral part of the physical environment. Human systems that separate humans from the whole physical environment perpetuate dualist sexist dominant paradigms. At issue here is a multiple, complex cultural identity of the ‘master’ framed in the context of class, race, species and gender domination (Wilson, 2005:333 and Stephen, 2005: 10), in the sense of humans being the masters of the world, and men being the masters of women.
2.3 Sustainable Development

The first definition of sustainable development is ascribed to the Brundtland Commission that in 1987 defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs” (SAHDR, 2003:2; Satterthweit, 1999:3). The role that governance (e.g. through government policies and institutions) plays in achieving sustainable development is highlighted in South Africa’s definition of sustainable development (taken from the National Environmental Management Act (Act No. 107 of 1998)):

“Sustainable development means the integration of social, economic and environmental factors into planning, implementation and decision-making so as to ensure that development serves present and future generations” (DEAT, 2006).

In the South African Human Development Report (2003:2) two issues were identified as fundamental to the attainment of sustainable development, namely, that of ensuring the needs of the poor are met and within that, minimizing any environmental impact by setting limits for resource exploitation. In this report the fact is also mentioned that African countries have been relying for years on external agents for achieving development without reaping measurable positive benefits. Accordingly, it is stated that the real dynamic of development lies in the empowerment that comes from taking ownership (SAHDR, 2003:6).

In addition to the need for a sustainable development approach to align economic growth and environment conservation, sustainable development carries the imperative of nurturing ingenuity for the long-term aim of human development. In practice, sustainable development therefore goes far beyond the environment and economic growth nexus, but involves political and social structures (SAHDR, 2003:6).

According to Chopra (2001:5) sustainable development strategies in rural communities are often rooted in livelihoods through linking livelihoods with natural resource
management programs. For example, the agriculture cooperatives are rooted in social capital networks. These programs empower the marginalized communities to determine their own priorities and to shape their own destiny. Through these efforts better employment is provided through a sustainable income, thereby strengthening the livelihood base of the community. In situations of high unemployment, people engage in volunteering work that has rewarded them with skills that have sometimes opened the door to paid occupations (SAHDR, 2003: 86 and Chopra, 2001:5).

2.4 Gender and social capital

The central concept of development revolves around the four capitals: economic (financial and physical assets); natural (both natural resources and maintenance of ecological systems); human (sum of individual knowledge, skills and physiological capacity) and social capital (social networks, norms and social trust) (Chopra, 2001:5).

The concept of capital comes from Economics theory and it implies the accumulation of wealth from which interest can be derived. This concept, relating to financial investments and rewards, has been extended to include human capital. The latter defines the stock of knowledge, skill and education (Tippet et al, 2006).

Without social capital, a community lacks cohesion which is essential in helping the society to use its human capital effectively for the benefit of all. Socially, communities with low social capital are characterized by less dense, meaningful, and truthful information flows. According to Meadows (2000:381), social cohesion is based on the integrity and efficiency of institutions, information system and human relationships.

Social capital is thus a measure of the intangible assets of a community such as networks, cultural pursuits, trust and commitments. Because of the local people’s shared values, the community is able to absorb shocks, exploit opportunities and orient itself towards the future together. The ability of citizens to propose, debate, pass and obey laws is part of social capital. The sense of a common purpose helps communities
to find local solutions thereby increasing the chances of sustainability of development actions (Beeton, 2006:4; De Beer and Swanepoel, 2000:105; and Lichtman, 2003:27).

Social capital as a stock of attributes refers not only to a single human being but to a collective. Trust, relational capacity and efficacy of the society’s information depend on the quality of information flows within the society. According to Beeton (2006:4) the sum of the total individual human capital contribution is thus held by the community members. However, if individual effort is solely expended on sustenance activities, then the individual capacities are unlikely to be amalgamated into capital for the whole society. This is often visible when flows of financial capital in the form of support or subsidy schemes to societies tend to diminish social capital through lessening the motivation for collective action.

Social capital is at risk of depreciation if not maintained. Like knowledge, where the stock of information is maintained through inflows of research, experiments and new understanding, it can also be drained by outflows of forgetting (Meadows 2000:381). The attributes of social capital do not change quickly because they bear the history of all past investments and depreciations. Meadows (2000:380) uses the example of public trust that decreases and depreciates when lies are told to people, but that can again increase when the truth is told. But she cautions that the impact of each lie or truth depends on the number of people who hear it (SAHDR, 2003: 160; and Meadows, 200:380).

According to Beeton (2006:4) negative migration is indicative of low social capital within a community as there is movement of human capital to other areas. This situation might be economically unattractive to those outsiders willing to invest money in the community. But the opposite is also true, and for instance, in many urban communities in South Africa new forms of social capital such as “stokvels” have been devised and are a sign of local ingenuity (SAHDR, 2003:160).

Measuring social capital according to Meadows (2000:381) is hard because it exists in different contexts, but the presence and absence of social capital can be sensed. Indicators of low social capital are difficult to point out but are often indicative of a lack
of investment in other forms of capital, for example in reducing crime. A few points of “subjective” measuring indicators of social capital would be population density - and the intensity of human relationships or frequency can be analyzed through the following:

- How often one sees your relatives and the length of the visits, in the sense that this gives an idea of the resilience, stability and functionality of the family
- The number of neighbors one knows by name, talk to often, understand something about their lives, in the sense that this gives and indication of the social integrity of the neighborhood
- Face-to-face interaction with your employer or neighbor or the supplier of the things one buys
- Face-to-face interaction with the people who teach your children, heal your body, have granted power of governance
- Whether social capital is enhanced or decreased by the size and power of institutions, as human relations may become more distant and abstract or more rich because of the impact of institutions (Meadows 2000:382).

In traditional villages, where societies are relatively immobile and decentralized, the density and frequency of face-to-face interactions are high, and this builds up the functional social capital of the community. Societies based on long-term personal relationships need few if any lawyers, judges, contractors, and rules (Meadows 2000: 382).

Rural areas in South Africa where African people live have had disruption of various forms of social capital because of the impact of apartheid. One of these was the migration of people from the rural to urban areas, and especially migrant working patterns which caused the temporary separation of male migrant workers from their families. Female domestic workers who had to leave their families to go and work in urban areas also experienced this separation. This separation had a negative impact on the cohesion of the family unit and the raising the children (SAHDR 2003:160).
On the other hand, immobile and decentralized communities can suffer from insularity, inbreeding and narrowness of ideas and viewpoints, suppression of deviance and suspiciousness of innovation (Meadows, 2000: 382).

Social capital is often seen as contributing simultaneously to financial sustainability, poverty targeting and the empowerment of women. This notion is based on the narrow understanding that the focus of social capital is on horizontal norms and networks. These are assumed to generate trust and information which might be used by development programs (Van Staveren, 2002:20).

Customary norms urge women to contribute to household needs by for instance growing food crops and so husbands expect their working wives to provide cash for the family. Women’s participation in credit programs only reinforces the pressure on them to contribute to household finances even though they face serious resource inequalities. These inequalities are in the form of accessing and controlling land, agricultural inputs, means of transport and education (Van Staveren, 2002:20).

The assumption that women’s labor time is infinitely elastic has resulted in perverse effects causing women to be targets of voluntary work in civil society. So, the social capital investment made by women actually increases their unpaid work burden.

Added to that is the treatment of social capital as a panacea for poverty by the substitution of it for access and control over resources by women. Sometimes social capital is even made a substitute for government policies (Van Staveren, 2002:21).

Molyneux (2002:179) describes this way of engaging with social capital as a degradation of the potential positive contributions of social capital to mere poor women’s coping strategies in times of economic crises and gender inequality (Van Staveren, 2002:22).

When one considers social capital, one has also has to consider the issue of where the power in communities lie – especially as the topic of this thesis relates to the empowerment of women within the context of traditional culture. This topic will be discussed in the next section.
2.5 The concept of power in society

Foucault (2000:29) cautions that power should not simplistically be regarded as a “phenomenon of mass and homogenous domination”, namely the domination of an individual over other people, or of one group over another, or even of one class over others. Viewed from another perspective, power can be seen as something which is divided between those who have it and tend to hold to it exclusively; and those who do not have it and are thus subjected to it.

Power is not localized by virtue of it being possessed by a few, and it is also not possessed as a commodity or wealth. Rather it is something that functions only when it is part of a chain. Power circulates and the individuals are in a position to submit to or exercise this power and thus, individuals are never “inert or consenting targets of power but always its relays”. In other words, power passes through individuals. We all have some elements of power in our bodies as power flows through it, but this does not mean that power is always well distributed. For example, power is often not fairly distributed in a democratic fashion.

As power forms networks, methodologically, Foucault (2000:30) suggests that the analysis of power could start at the centre and work through the various levels to see how far the power has penetrated downwards (a descending analysis). It is also important to analyze the extent to which power is reproduced and renewed in societies. The analysis can also be ascending through for example infinitesimal mechanisms which have their own history, trajectory, techniques and tactics.

2.6 Feminism

As the topic of this thesis relates to the empowerment of women, a consideration of various feminist theories is appropriate. Feminism is defined as “an awareness of oppression, exploitation and/ or subordination of women within the society and the conscious action to change and transform this situation” (Msimang, 2002:7).
Feminism is a social movement that originated during the 1960s in the United States of America (USA). This was a social response to the post World War II characteristics of the society where women were only expected to be mothers and good wives. These expectations therefore degraded women to roles of subordination to men (Kritzinger, 2002:1).

The primary aim of the feminists’ social formations is the promotion of women’s rights, addressing the issues of inequality and male dominance. The feminist agenda is aligned to the enlightenment liberalism belief that all human beings have a kind of selfhood. This implies a right to possess their bodies and the results of that body's labour - all feminist political and social initiatives today depend on these tenets (Baym, 1995:3).

Baym (1995:4) says that society does not guarantee to women all the rights and privileges that it considers appropriate to the status of being human. Liberal feminists hold that universally, whatever any culture may value, women get less of it than men. If, conversely, you want to know what a culture - any culture, not merely western late capitalism - does not value, you should look at what it gives or ascribes or leaves to its women (Baym, 1995:4).

The following feminist theories are regarded as appropriate to this thesis, and are discussed briefly below: Liberal Feminism, Marxist Feminism, and particularly African Feminism.

2.6.1 Liberal Feminism

This is an individualistic form of feminism that is concerned with the rights of the individual to choices and self-determination, as well as with political and religious freedoms.
Contemporary Liberal Feminism explains inequality through the interplay between four factors namely, (1) social construction of gender; (2) the gendered division of labor; (3) the division between the private and public spheres, and (3) patriarchal ideology. In the liberal discourse, contemporary societies are based on two spheres of production, namely the public and the private spheres. Men often have access to the public sphere of work and politics. Women, on the other hand, are given primary functions in the public sphere, for example, secretarial jobs that allow women to do a lot of work but these women are deprived of the social rewards such as status, power and self worth. In the public sphere women also still experience discrimination, sexism and marginalization. Women's choice of involving themselves in the public sphere doesn't allow them to be exempted from home duties within their private sphere (Kritzinger, 2002:2).

Liberal feminism uses the law as a way of addressing gender inequalities. By using this tool, discriminatory laws have been eradicated in social spheres such as education, public institutions and the work place. What became problematic with the liberal feminist approach was that it retained the American ethos of democracy and capitalism. This ethos is based on values of individualism, freedom of choice, responsibility and equal opportunities. The critics of liberal feminism see these as the very fundamentals that ensure the continued existence of inequality within the society, as laws are only applicable to the public sphere, and not to the private sphere as it would be unconstitutional. This means that the state, when forming laws, may not legislate on areas concerning the body, sexuality and sexual division of labor in homes (Kritzinger, 2002: 3).

Other critics of Liberal Feminism focus on the assumption that all women, irrespective of race, sexuality and class share the same interests and experiences. These critics go on to say that Liberal Feminism serves the agenda of white, middle class, heterosexual women.
Despite these criticisms, Liberal Feminism has made very important contributions in the fight against gender discrimination, thereby improving the quality of life of women through education and legal reforms. On the other hand, it has failed in dealing with patriarchy and power relations – leading to the realization that focusing on the number of women in a structure does not amount to genuine equality (Kritzinger, 2002:4).

2.6.2 Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminism is based on Marxist theory which views material processes such as the production and reproduction of social life as the prime mover of history. Through their collective labour men and women collectively create societies that in turn shape them (Kritzinger, 2002:8).

Marx argued that the mode of production of a society generates the superstructure namely, the legal, political and social ideas. Marxist feminists believe that social existence determines consciousness and thus in order to understand why women are oppressed in ways that men are not, the relationship between women’s work status and self-image needs to be examined.

Contrary to liberal thinkers’ view of capitalism as a system of voluntary exchange relations; Marxists view capitalism as system of exploitative power relations. Marxist theory says that employers own the means of production such as tools, land and labour and that this gives them more power to determine the labour conditions of the workers. These conditions often expose workers to exploitation and they are coerced into believing that capitalist relations are essentially based on exchange relations.

Marxist feminists try to expose the underlying power relations. For example, the Marxist feminist view on prostitution is that selling of reproductive services is a result of coercion, rather than of freedom of choice, as there is often nothing else to sell (Kritzinger, 2002:8).
Although, as in most feminist movements, solidarity is regarded as important, the Marxist ideas on class and class consciousness recognize that women are not homogenous but belong to different classes within society. At the same time there are some commonalities between these different classes of women as they do share common domestic experiences. Marxist feminists seek to ensure the recognition of domestic labour as real or productive labour that creates surplus value. The devaluation of women’s domestic labour meant that they were seen in capitalism as mere consumers while men were seen to do productive labour. Therefore, in the capitalist system men were given family wages that indirectly or directly removed women and children from the public to the domestic sphere (Kritzinger, 2002:9).

Marxist feminists also cite examples where they notice alienation happening. These areas are isolation from the products of their labor; from themselves; from other human beings; and from nature. The isolation from nature causes women to see nature as an obstacle they have to overcome to survive. The worst of these areas of alienation is the alienation from themselves where woman are regarded as being fulfilled only if they cater to other people’s needs.

According Kritzinger (2002:9) Marxist feminists believe that the socialization of domestic work is the first step towards empowerment of women as it will ultimately result in the recognition of these duties. This process would involve sharing of all of the responsibilities in the house by all people who reside there. This is because as long as women are not freed from responsibilities such as childcare, even their participation in paid work will not liberate them.

Marxist feminists further proposed that the state should pay women for their domestic work as they are part of the production chain, even though they are not recognized formally. This would be in the form of a wage, and if not paid, housewives should go on strike. Not everybody supported this cause. A special tax was proposed to pay for domestic work, but this was also not supported by everybody as it was believed that it would cause an unfair burden on single people. Wages for domestic work will further
strengthen the capitalist system’s tendency to turn everything into a commodity (Kritzinger, 2002:9).

2.6.3 African Feminism

The African women’s movement is strongly influenced and shaped by the activism against colonial rule and racist ideologies. African women found it hard to separate their struggle out from these other struggles against colonialism and racism as repression and exploitation were experienced by both men and women. Therefore the primary focus of feminism on the African continent was on changing social and humanitarian conditions. Therefore, contrary to Western feminists, they had a lesser focus on sexist conditions (Maerten, 2004:2).

After independence from European colonizers, African countries have been confronted with succession crises, failed multi-party politics and failed state nationalism. Some countries’ governments were overthrown by military dictators which later caused economic instability. Western-steered development programs for Africa were channeled via donor funding which came with mandatory prerequisites to adhere to democracy. Pressure was put onto the new states by the technologically advanced nations of the global economy, even as the technological divide between the developed and the developing worlds widened (Maerten, 2004:2).

Although the entire African population has suffered, the living conditions today of specifically African women are indicative of the high price paid for all the above. Generally, African women have a low level of education and are primarily involved in subsistence agriculture and other rural activities. In many African countries, a large percentage of the population suffers from malnutrition, and the mortality rate of infants and children is high (Maerten, 2004:2).

Western feminists have thus intervened by promoting the participation of women in development programs. They pressurized funding agents by making women’s
participation a condition for grant availability. This has created a situation where, on one hand, women are given the opportunities to participate in crucial decision making processes and be actively involved in public institutions. On the other hand, this western pressure is resisted by those in power. The women’s participation is viewed as top-down instruction imposed by the West and not stemming from people’s own culture and experiences (Maerten, 2004:2).

The private-public debate in the Western Feminism is often used to explain gender roles where traditionally women are more associated with the private sphere (children, home) whereas men are seen in connection with public life and ensuing social roles.

According to Maerten (2004:3) the African situation is different as the role allocation does not necessarily include the subjection of women. This is because women are not put under control of anybody by way of forcing them to perform specific roles. However, for African women the acceptance of certain social roles does not exclude a rejection of women’s oppression.

Another way in which African feminism differs from Western feminism is the value that African women attach to the reproductive role of women, as well as the tendency to put the community before the individual (Maerten, 2004:3).

To African women, their reproductive roles are very important and they are never regarded as inferior to any other role. Motherhood is an inherent aspect of womanhood that should not be questioned and there is no need for conflict between motherhood and playing an economic role (Maerten, 2004:3).

In African society the emphasis is usually more on the community than on the individual. This perspective ensures that elements in the domestic, economic and political roles overlap, and therefore, the biological role of women is not perceived to be a cause of conflict.
According to Maerten (2004:2) African women are traditionally active in many roles and both men and women often take complementary and even parallel responsibilities. These roles are often determined by the membership of the collective group (clan, tribe or family).

Communities that adhere to traditional African cultures have strong networks of relationships that connect people, thereby bringing about the harmony and well-being of the whole community. There is thus some commonality in most African societies, but the extent of it and the roles of women therein may vary. In most western cultures the organization of society is at some point strictly separated from family ties. This is especially true of those cultures where the protection of the individual's freedom and individualism is highly valued. In African society, this separation does not exist. The emphasis on family ties has resulted in unique political possibilities for certain women as this made it possible for them to participate in politics for the benefit of the whole clan. However, it must be said that, within the clan, men enjoyed more privileges (Maerten, 2004: 4).

In some African cultures there is a tradition of double-gender organization. This is when women are able to participate as members of a ritual or professional organization or a gender-specific organization where they participate on behalf of the family. In this situation women thus cannot speak on their own behalf or stand for interests that are against those of the family. Even in organizations where women are represented they are there to represent the interests of the family, clan or tribe. Some women who are elected to tribal or traditional leadership are not allowed to speak on their own behalf, but only speak for the clan or group (Maerten, 2004:4).

As women’s participation is often on behalf of a group and not on behalf of themselves, it is therefore logical that women usually will be unwilling to go against the interests of family or group during decision making. The ultimate form of double-gender organization is the dual monarchy, which was customary in certain African tribes. The
point to note though is that the existence of female leadership does not imply that individual ordinary women had equal rights (Maerten, 2004: 4).

2.7 Complexity theory

Now that certain aspects related to the empowerment of women within a sustainable social context have been discussed, it is appropriate to look at how all of these might fit together in a complex system. This is the focus of the rest of this literature survey.

2.7.1 Applications of chaos theory in social organizations

The need for change in organizations, communities and societies is imminent as we interact within a dynamic, non-linear world. We need to choose between being innovative and adapting or dying. It is hard, however, to find any coherent model or underpinning framework to explain why these changes for example have increased. Conventional management theories lacked the practical guidelines for organizational survival or growth. This lead to the emergence of physical science approaches to help understand these processes (Lewis, 1994:16).

Klein (2004: 3) discussed the paradigm shift from a linear description of knowledge to a view of knowledge as a network or web with multiple dynamic nodes of connection. Such a view is linked to the replacement of the concepts of unity, universality and certainty with those of plurality, relationally, and uncertainty in a complex world. Older values of control, mastery and expertise are being reformulated as dialogue, interaction and negotiation.

Chaos theory has lead to the understanding that complex systems are by nature incapable of being predicted as these systems are non-linear and dynamic. A chaos
zone is characterized by a lot of changes and a lot of information generation because agents are very mobile, making it difficult for systems to learn (Klein, 2004:3).

According to Uys (2002:35), this zone of uncertainty needs less control, and more trust in order for creativity to be realized. Organizations do not falter because they do not plan to stay abreast of the environment, but because they choose to adapt in stead of creating something new. Because of bureaucracy, strong control, uniformity, predictions and stability, organizations do not create alternatives that are based on understanding what they do and if what they do makes sense. As such chaos theory provides organizations with insight about when control is reasonable and possible, as well as about the extent of the control needed.

Chaotic behavior could move in two directions, either to a higher order representing a new synthesis through self organization, or to chaos. The chaotic relationship between variables results from the fact that the relations between inputs and outputs cannot be confirmed. This promotes a complex interchange or feedback (both negative and positive). Negative feedback loops maintaining equilibrium and positive feedback loops deliberately or accidentally drive the system into disequilibrium so as to stimulate the system into creativity (Uys, 2002: 38).

2.7.2 Complexity at the edge of chaos

Beyond chaos is a complexity zone often called the edge of chaos. In the complexity zone, systems adapt, learn and evolve (grow) (Lewis, 1994:16; Mitleton-Kelly, 2003:22; Surie and Hazy, 2006:13).

There is no single unified theory of complexity, but several theories that arose from various natural science fields studying complex systems. These fields include biology, chemistry, physics, computer simulation, mathematics, and evolution (Swilling, 2002:11; Mitleton-Kelly, 2003:1).
Mitleton-Kelly (2003:5), traces the meaning of the word from the Latin word *plexus* which means braided or entwined, which is derived from *complexus* meaning braided together. As such, complex behavior arises from the intricate inter-twining or interconnectivity of elements within a system and between systems and its environment.

In addition, the word “complexity” relates to the Latin word “complexus” which means “totality”, and the science of complexity explores the totality of dynamics namely forces, energies, substances and forms (Dimitrov, 1990:1 and Mitleton-Kelly, 2003:5).

Adopting a complexity approach does not provide a set tools and a methodology for managing systems, but through its theories, it is able to provide conceptual framework for engaging with the system. This is through a way of thinking and a way of seeing the world. Complexity thinking is built on a paradigm that seeks to account for the articulation between the disciplinary fields recognizing that the whole is bigger that the sum of its parts. Complexity is a way of thinking which includes concepts such as uncertainty, “because there cannot be absolute knowledge”; contradiction, “a form of antagonism between concepts” and which applies equally to people and society.

This is contrary to the conventional logical thinking which often uses reductionism and is based on controlling reality (Browaeys and Baets, 2003:336; Mitleton-Kelly, 2003:4). Furthermore, as Browaeys and Baets (2003:335) argue, complexity thinking is different from positivist epistemology as it involves the eventual need for exploring and developing new ways of generating knowledge. This is where scientific spirit can progress, creating new methods of knowledge generation through bridging the gap between scientific and philosophical disciplines, eventually leading to a transdisciplinary discipline (Browaeys and Baets, 2003:335).
2.7.3 Characteristics of a complex system

Now that the nature of complexity has briefly been discussed, it is appropriate to focus attention on the characteristics of complex systems, in particular as these can help to describe society as a complex system.

a) Complex systems consist of a large number of elements that interact dynamically. A social system is constituted of human individuals, economy, environment, institutions that engage constantly and exchanging information. Through the formation of patterns of interconnection, information is encoded and meaning is generated. Through the interdependence and interconnection of individuals, their actions cause emergent properties that characterize the whole system (Cilliers, 1998: 120 and Pabjan: 2005:102).

b) Interactions between sub-systems are fairly rich and non-linear. The interactions of human individuals in postmodern society are growing continuously. Due to the non-linear character of the system, processes such as self-organization, dynamic adaptation and evolution are able to take place. These interactions are asymmetrical as the same information may have different meanings to the same people. Therefore, small causes can have large effects (Cilliers, 1998:120).

The classical example used to define this phenomenon (the “butterfly effect”) is that of a butterfly flapping its wings in Argentina and resulting in a hurricane off the coast of Florida (small cause and large effect). This happens when a system is balanced at the edge of complexity characterized by small causes having enormous effects and is often technically termed “sensitive dependence on initial conditions”. In day to day running of organizations, as in societies, very small incidents often result in a complex combination of unpredictable results (Eoyang, Olson and Kennedy, 2006:2).
Power relations are often exercised through behavioral patterns, the system’s norms and social rules. Moreover, the power relations regulate the society’s competitive nature and bring an imbalance in individual relationships (Cilliers, 1998:120; and Pabjan 2005:102). Cilliers (1998:120) says that it is essential for the asymmetry to exist between individuals as it causes adults to take care of infants, and students to learn from teachers, etc. At the same time he refers to the temptation to dominate and exploit the powerless which goes hand in hand with this asymmetry. He stresses that the solution of such exploitation does not lie in the symmetrical space because such a space does not exist in complex systems that are driven by non-linearity. Non-linearity, power, competition and asymmetry are inevitable components of a complex system (Cilliers, 1998:120).

c) The interactions in a complex system take place at a fairly short range. The elements in a complex system interact primarily with those elements close to them and in societies the individuals work together in clusters. Because of the lack of control over the generation of information because of outside influences, the elements in a system are not separate from members of other systems. Therefore, because of the non-linearity of the connections, outside influences can reverberate through the system, causing large internal effects (Cilliers, 1998:120).

d) Complex systems have feedback loops. Feedbacks are traditionally seen in terms of positive and negative mechanisms. These feedback loops are functional in the absence of a rigid external boundary (Mitleton-Kelly, 2002:15 and Eoyang and Berkas, 1998: 7). The role of negative feedback loops is to balance the system through a process of moderating and dampening. The positive feedback loops, however, drive change by reinforcing the system (Cilliers, 1998:120).

In human systems that operate far from equilibrium, a feedback loop is active when the system is experiencing perturbation well away from its established norms, working ways or relations. For example, the introduction of gender
equality legislation in the rural areas may cause some uncertainty in the villages as it challenges the norms that are based on and perpetuated by inequality. After such disturbances, the system either degrades into disorder (for instance the loss of morals or productivity) or finds new order through a process of a new coherence (Mitleton-Kelly, 2002:16). For example, when the gender equality legislation is enforced in villages, men either reject it outright because they see it as the cause of conflict with their interests or the men concur with it as they see it as morally correct. Form the above, the latter refers to coherence after the disturbance or perturbation and the former referrers to the system going toward chaos or disorder after perturbation (Cilliers, 1998:120).

The degree of connectivity and interdependency often determines the strength of the feedback. In human systems, this has an effect on action and behavior. However, action and behavior may also vary according to the time and context (Cilliers, 1998:120).

Open systems that are subject to the exchanging of information and energy when co-evolving, often reciprocate feedback. For example, the interaction of individuals in a society involves the emission and absorption of information. The reaction to new information (gender legislation) introduced in the village will change as it flows around the people. It is during this process of information exchange that the feedback would be reciprocated either through negative or positive feedback loops (Cilliers, 1998:120).

e) Complex systems are open systems that operate far from equilibrium. The interaction of local individuals within the society, as a social group, with for example the environment characterizes the openness of the systems. This openness allows a constant flow of information and energy that enables the system to change, evolve and survive. Energy flow is necessary for lowering entropy in order for the system to move away from reaching equilibrium, stability and symmetry. The second law of thermodynamics states that a system in
isolation needs energy from other local systems to lower its entropy for it not to reach entropic decay when in equilibrium or stable. This process causes disorder in the systems where this energy comes from, and unless it is dead, the entire system is thus in constant movement (Cillier, 1998:120).

f) Complex systems have history and the elements are ignorant of the behavior of the whole system in which they are embedded. History in a complex system is a collection of traces distributed over the system and is subjectively interpreted. The past events are always open to multiple interpretations that are not used as master keys for unlocking the true meaning of the present conditions. However, it is impossible to think in the present or about the future without considering the past because of changing context which might render the information irrelevant. Because of the overwhelming amount of information generated by the whole complex system (society) it is impossible for the elements to grasp. Elements only respond to local information, and they are insignificant on their own, but the interaction between elements determines the nature of the system. However, single elements neither understand nor control the whole system fully (Cilliers, 1998:120).

2.7.4 Principles of attraction and fracticality

The principle of attraction relates to a dynamic behavior of life processes that always gravitate to some relatively stable dynamic pattern based on attractors (Dimitrov, 1998:2).

Examples of an attractor are: When all parts of a system move towards the same endpoint, this is a point attractor. An example of this phenomenon is after the end of an activity, for instance a movie, where people are moving toward the exit and therefore the pattern of motion is towards a single endpoint. Another example is when the behavior of the system stays within the observable bounds, where within those bounds everything is possible. For instance, in corporate culture individual employees are
allowed to have choices within certain bounds of behavior that are accepted (Eoyang, Olson, Kennedy, 2006:3).

According to Dimotrov (1998:2) human desires are subject to attractors thereby influencing the way people behave or respond to situations. The six attractors that influence the desires of humans are as follows: three attractors influence human actions towards acquiring power, knowledge and freedom; and the other three attractors influence human action towards experiencing love, pleasure and long life.

Levick (2004:1) defines fracticality as a process that defines an entity that has self-similarity at many scales of focus. In terms of this self-similarity, a human fractal can he described as an individual human being; his or her family; his or her home-town population; provincial population; national population; global population etc.

Fracticality can be understood by illustrated as follows. When an individual experiences hardship and prosperous times; and joys and sorrows. These experiences are also reflected by his or her family; as well as by the community to the whole city; the nation; and eventually by the whole of humankind (Levick, 2004: 4). From the self-similarity explanation each of these several entities (individual, family, community, city, province, nation, and humanity) can be described as a single fractal. An influence at any scale of focus will affect the fractal at all scales of focus and there is no separation among the various scales of focus (Levick, 2004:4).

Another example, is in term of organizational behaviour. In an organization, core values shape organization-wide behaviors and each individual uses these core values to solve his/her problems. Therefore over multiple problems and multiple solutions organization-wide patterns emerge (Eoyang, Olson, Kennedy, 2006:3; Boyatzis, 2006: 608). In organizations fractals provide a sense of identity and shared experience for individual groups (Eoyang, Olson, Kennedy, 2006:3).
2.7.5 Human complexity

The above examples illustrate that complexity is a fact of human life. The complex and chaotic dynamism of human life is often difficult to grasp as these dynamics are susceptible to actions, thoughts, stories, feeling beliefs and attitudes. Often, changes in these seemingly small aspects of the flow of human thinking processes, can bring forth radical transformation (Dimitrov, 1998:2).

According to Dimitrov (1998:4) vital interconnections and interdependence between dynamic systems and their environment change and co-evolve inseparably. This is because they experience the same natural forces in their integrated ecological space (IES). Within the IES, the dynamic of all forms is driven by common self-organization and self-propelling forces that are responsible for reproduction and growth at a rhythm we cannot predict. These processes are thus supported by strange attractors when the system parameters pass beyond certain critical values (Dimitrov and Woog, 2000:161).

According to Vedic literature people’s actions are usually directed towards acquiring power, knowledge and freedom, as well as experiencing love, pleasure and long life. Human beings’ every day activity, whether consciously or not, is inevitably driven by these six chaotic strange attractors. The acquisition of possessions, money, higher social status, and skill puts a person in a better place towards exercising power in the society. Associated with power, is the degree to which people extend their knowledge by getting educated, and by enriching themselves culturally or spiritually. This can be interpreted as sign of intelligence (Dimitrov, 1998:4).

Freedom is fundamental for opening spaces for new possibilities, skill realization, creativity, talents, artistic abilities, dreams etc. Experience of love is a powerful driver of people’s lives, supplemented by a multitude of pleasurable, some of which can be addictive and even threatening to survival. Added to these chaotic strange attractors for human dynamics, is the non-chaotic or fixed attractor of death (Dimitrov, 1998:4).
Spending lives trying to fulfill desires that are driven by these attractors and doing nothing but repeating the same patterns can be avoided. This can be through three processes namely, by the system bifurcating to another powerful attractor, the system exhausting energy sources and by the system transcending the power of the attraction (Dimitrov, 1998:6).

2.7.6 Social complexity

Humans as social beings interact with each other through communication and social participation which might have undesirable consequences. Societies are complex, chaotic and are often under pressure to adapt and evolve (Espejo, 2004:671). The focus of the rest of this literature review is on unbundling societal and cultural complex systems within society.

In our daily lives, we all experience complexity, chaotic agency, rich connectivity and a diversity of participants and resources. From this interactive chaos some form of order emerges. Simple interactive rules among participants constitute self-organization processes that produce complex systems (Espejo, 2004: 672).

There is a constant exchange of information between systems at the local area and all systems require external energy and resources to maintain themselves over time. These energy needs create competition for the resources and energy in the same ecology. A constant flow of energy to the systems ensures that the systems do not reach equilibrium and this energy flow happens at the level of the individual actor. Viewing society as a system, shows that intrinsic social forces (e.g. networks and trust) rule the system and prevent it from collapsing. Within society, there are other complex levels that exist as emergent properties characterizing the system as a whole, and it is these aspects that determine the behavior in the system (Espejo, 2004:672; and Pabjan, 2005: 101-102).
To deal with the institutional aspects (e.g. marriage and customs) of social complexity, there is a need for engaging with patterns of behavior, norms and social rules. It is important to understand culture as a system that has components or subsystems consisting of values, norms, and patterns of behavior (Pabjan, 2005: 101).

To further broaden our understanding of the complexity of social systems, different aspects and levels of social phenomena must be considered. These refer to both the dynamic and static aspects of a system. The dynamic approach to understanding social systems explores equilibrium, relation of elements, conflict, developments etc. The static approach to understanding social systems, deals with structure, norms, individuals, groups, institutions, culture, and collective action (Pabjan, 2005: 101).

2.7.7 The implications of complexity for culture

The above discussion leads to a consideration of the implications of complexity for culture. According to Teerikangas and Hawk (2002:3; 4) and Situngkir (2002:5) any group of people who spend a considerable amount of time together end up forming social habits and societal ways of behavior that shape their culture. Culture itself represents their view of the world, which they express by means of communication and shared behavior patterns. Culture consists of both material and immaterial attributes which include people’s feelings, beliefs, knowledge, morals, laws, customs and arts.

The development of culture depends on the nature of the group members and the environmental conditions within which they exist. These environmental conditions co-determine the values, norms and assumptions that underlie the culture of the area. Added to this, are unique patterns of societal structure that show up as differences in kinship, hierarchy, decision-making, power, religion, economic status etc. Early religion provided the foundation for tribal people’s view of the world by for instance linking bad weather with a bad omen and claiming that a ritual (e.g. dancing) could help calm the god(s) of nature (Situngkir, 2004:4-5 and Teerikangas and Hawk, 2002:4).
The Newtonian paradigm is the cornerstone of the type of scientific thought that views these qualitative attributes of culture as highly subjective. This is because the Newtonian paradigm is based on linearity, determinism, time-reversibility, and the connection between the cause and consequence. The validation of results is based on assumptions of reductionism where an understanding of the separate parts is usually generalized to an understanding of the whole population. Sadly, this presumption found its way into the human and management sciences under the guise of adopting proper scientific method (Situngkir, 2004:7).

Culture is a complex attribute of a society that refers to the pattern of conduct of its participants that is open to change. It is a kind of abstraction of the interactions and relations among individuals in the society (Situngkir 2002: 5-6).

According to Teerikangas and Hawk (2002:10) qualitative research shows that culture differs along certain shared dimensions such as the use of the hierarchy concept and power structures. Culture also organizes societies into structures by influencing or being influenced by societal and religious belief systems that all members embrace. Culture may be likened to systemic thinking in that culture is aligned to the relations between members in society, rather than to individuals (Teerikangas and Hawk, 2002: 12).

As in the case of a complex system, cultures converge towards unknown structures that might be imagined as “fractals” in complexity theory. Cultures are formed of different subcultures. An example of this is when a human being coming from a particular cultural system, is confronted by an educational and social system that is different from his/her background (Teerikangas and Hawk, 2002:13). Superimposed upon this, the person might also be embracing the values of a hobby culture, for example tennis. Later, when going to study at university the person has to adapt to the university culture, and the culture of his/her friends, and this phenomenon will continue throughout his/her life. Therefore, complexity thinking is able to expose the subcultures as part of the natural complexity and systems of society and culture. It is evident from the above as Browaeys
and Baets (2003:333) said, that culture exhibits the character of a non-Cartesian epistemology and it is thus not in good harmony with traditional Newtonian thinking (Teerikangas and Hawk, 2002:13 and Pabjan 2005:102).

Cultures are dynamic and not static because they change over time, from within and without, depending on the environmental conditions they are subjected to. Defining the culture of a society as the set of behaviors of the majority of the members of that society, fails to expose the multi-faceted nature of culture. The fact that culture is multi-faceted allows culture to adapt to environmental conditions (Teerikangas and Hawk, 2002: 13).

By adopting a complexity theory viewpoint, societies can be understood both from a formal and informal, and a subjective and objective angle. A reductionist statistical approach to research into culture, will not yield complete answers (Teerikangas and Hawk, 2002: 14, and Browaeys and Baets, 2003:333).

Even in a so-called mono-cultural environment there are always these interactions of sub-cultures that are somehow diverse. This diversity mainly resides in people as they are the ones who are different in terms of for instance personality and genetics. However, this diversity also extends beyond the individual level, for instance to different clans and family units within the society. As shown above, complexity theory emphasizes the value of diversity. A society that is tolerant of diversity has a competitive advantage in that it allows people, irrespective of gender and religious affiliation and so forth, to perform at their best. Societal interrelationships are enriched by diversity. Through an acceptance of different voices within a diverse society, culture evolves. This inclusivity gives more credibility to the process of evolution and therefore expands the opportunities for and potential of sub-cultures (Teerikangas and Hawk, 2002: 14, and Browaeys and Baets, 2003:333).
2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter reveals that gender is a socially constructed concept that informs gender roles in society. These gender roles inform and informed by rules, regulation, norms of interaction between men and women within the society. It is in these interactions that local culture is formed through the values, norms and rules. The local culture through among other things tradition and customs informs the power relations that determine the processes of resources allocation within the society. Gender inequity and inequality redress has taken place in many approaches in the sphere of development. These approaches are informed by feminism which was explored in this chapter as a means of unveiling the aspects of power within an African society. It was also necessary to explore complexity, chaos and systems thinking in a quest of unveiling the underlying complexities in the society, culture and human being. Literature on social capital in relation to gender was studied towards a development that is sustainable.
3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information on among others the research methodology, the research design and sampling, as well as on how the data was analyzed.

In Section 3.2 the research design and sampling are discussed. Thereafter, the data collection is discussed in Section 3.3. Ethical aspects are discussed in Section 3.4, and issues related to the validity and reliability of the results are discussed in Section 3.5.

3.2 Research design: Sample for data collection and sampling technique

The study was carried out at the Engcobo Local Municipality’s rural villages namely Lwandlana, Rasmeni and Khanyi. In these three villages water and sanitation projects are run by Mvula Trust (an NGO). The community democratically elected structures called the Community Services Providers (CSP) to manage the water projects. Women belonging to the CSP structure were selected to take part in this study.

Within a group of women who are actively involved in the water projects, five were selected for this study. These women have been involved in the water projects since inception and they were born and brought up in a rural setup.

Initially, the aim was to get a stratified sample in terms of age, as well as position within the water services sector, but in the end practical considerations prevailed. The researcher was aided in the sample selection by a development officer from a large NGO, Mvula Trust, working on water projects in the area. The selection of the women was based on their history of participation in development projects. In proposing the
women to take part in the research, the subjective judgment of the Mvula Trust development officer came into play.

According to Grbich (2004:61) in social research it is pointless to emphasize the homogeneity of a sample because the parameters and the dimensions of a given population are prone to change. The complexity approach to human beings recognizes that individuals are changing entities and therefore only snapshots of their activities can be achieved. The snapshots are bounded by time and context that are often complementary to maximum variation through heterogeneous sampling (Grbich, 2004:61).

Although women may be looked at as a homogenous group, subtle variations the following strata make them heterogeneous: the class they belong to; marital status; level of education; employment and income levels; migration and exposure to urban life. This will ensure that the data collected is not generalized but has depth and meaning that might be use to contrast individuals located at different subjectivities and life stages (Gray, 2003:100).

Gray (2003:101) also suggests that the selection of participants for a small-scale project should be identified in accordance with their capacity to provide as rich a set of data as can be managed. The women who took part in this study are within their early and mid-forty years, four of them are married and one is single. They are therefore able to provide information on a broad range of experiences.

3.3 Method of Data Collection

In-depth interviews were conducted with these women in a form of story telling about their lives and involvement in the water projects. According to Elliot (2006:32) the in-depth interviews approach emphasizes that respondents be allowed to set the agenda and that they be listened to. This is contrary to being asked questions, a process which
allows respondents to give selective information thereby suppressing their stories (Elliot, 2006:32).

The use of a digital audio recorder is essential as it allows the interviewer to give his/her full attention to the interviewee rather than pausing to take notes at the end of the interview. Furthermore, for a ninety or more minutes interview it would be impractical to try to remember the interviewee’s response and make detailed notes at the end of the interview (Elliot, 2006:33).

It is suggested that that ninety minutes is the optimum length of time for a qualitative research interview. In some research projects where time allocation for the interviews was two hours, respondents carried on talking for up to six hours. It was then suggested that if the quantity of material to be covered in an interview is judged to need more than two hours then a second and third interview should be scheduled (Elliot, 2006:32). Thus, three interviews of two hours each were conducted and reordered in this format:

Interview 1 was about the life story of the each woman; Interview 2 was focused on the involvement of the woman in the water project; and Interview 3 was aimed at retracing each woman’s life story in relation to her involvement in the water projects by asking more complex questions about experiences within particular roles namely as a girl, as a daughter, as a mother, as a wife, as a woman in the community, as a participant in the development process. Interview 3 focused on the details as identified by the description of the women’s roles during Interviews 1 and 2.

3.4 Study site and research participant selection

In answering the research question a qualitative (narrative) approach with a detailed in-depth data was collected. It was thus imperative to use a small sample and a small number of participants.
Prior to using this research technique in the ELM a testing was done in Mpumalanga/Limpopo a few weeks earlier where the a few considerations were noted. It was crucial and would thus be an advantage for the researcher to conduct the study within a community whose language, traditions, culture he/she was familiar with. This would minimize the questions of clarity researchers tend to pose from time-to-time as they might influence the data quality (through implicitly leading the subject to answers). Added to the above is the question of logistics in terms of finance, access to the women, time spent on the study for both researcher and subject etc. It was through the assistance of the NGO’s Development Officer who has been working on the projects with the women that the meetings between the women and researcher were possible. Especially with those women who are active in the projects.

The results from the research technique testing exercise informed the process of site selection. The researcher’s familiarity with the study site’s language, tradition and culture was taken into consideration. Two study sites were identified in the Eastern Cape where Mvula Trust was running Water and Sanitation Development Projects. Engcobo Local Municipality Water and Sanitation Development Projects were selected.

3.4.1 Ethical aspects of the research

The research aims and research processes were discussed with the development officer when she was selecting and proposing participants for the exercise. During the first meeting with the participants, the aims and objectives of the project were explained. The kind of information (data) needed by the researcher to achieve those research objectives was also discussed.

The researcher was introduced to the interviewees by the development officer who is known to the interviewees. During this introduction the following information was given to the interviewees: Personal information about the researcher (who the researcher is, where he is from, what work he does, who his employer is, how his project relates to
them as women involved in the water projects; information about the interview process (how the personal interviews are going to be done, the confidentiality of the personal information; the right that the interviewees had to withhold information, such as their names, as well as when and where the interviews were going to take place).

Ethical issues were specifically raised and explained in relation to the participants’ rights to withhold information that they were not comfortable with divulging or thought was sensitive for them to talk about. One of the points highlighted was the importance to the researcher that the research exercise should not humiliate or indignify participants in the research process (Gray, 2003:75).

Three of the women were not comfortable with being interviewed in their homesteads and the interviews were conducted at the school and local hall. During these interviews the researcher ensured that they felt comfortable by initially talking off the record about life around the village. The researcher is a person who comes from the same traditional culture as the interviewees and he adopted the attitude that he is there to learn. This ensured that he did not insist when being refused some information as it was not his intention to humiliate or indignify the women.

3.5 Validity, reliability and testing of the data collection process

According to Gray (2003:71), evaluative terms such as reliability, validity and representation are designed to interrogate the product and claims of social research through kinds of methods such as statistical surveys or quantifiable interviews. These quantitative instruments are in most instances used in a quest to answer qualitative questions which often leads to responses that are defensive and hasty and that often reject the assumption behind the questions. Qualitative research studies do not claim to be representative or generalizable to the population (Gray, 2003:71).

The validity of life history research is dependent on the research questions that encapsulate the aim of the process (Elliot, 2006:4). Gray (2003:71) says qualitative
research tends to be weak in generalizability but strong in validity. This author refers to the accuracy of the picture presented of the subject and the context of the study. This first-hand account from the actors involved is subjective and focuses on the following: the way of life of the subjects, how they account for their lives, what their passions are and their sense of self.

A pre-test of the data collection instrument was used to interview a woman who is a community leader on a village’s water and sanitation project close to a small town called Burgersfort in Limpopo Province South Africa. A senior colleague was asked to observe the interview process and make comments afterward about possible ways of improving the interview technique.

3.6 Reflexivity

A reflective approach to a study questions the theoretical part of the research and the assumptions of the projects by interrogating the research categories and strata such as age, class, gender etc. Through paying close attention to social actors, cultural and social processes some of the more extravagant claims of theoretical work can be questioned and investigated (Gray, 2003:22). Grbich (2004:28) says reflexivity refers to the process of reflecting on the impact of the new information an interviewer is exposed to, through interaction and data collection in the research setting. Self-reflexivity involves the heightened awareness of the self in the process of knowledge creation and where the interviewer places himself during the exercise (Grbich, 2004:28).

Through dialogues, open and sincere exploration is done for example in three ways, through conservation interviews between subject and researcher; through research data with the different theoretical perspectives or frameworks; and discussing the work with colleagues especially when writing the work before presenting it as complete (Gray, 2003:22).
These processes of reflecting on the project help in identifying what kind of knowledge is being produced at every stage of the research, which concepts are too rigid and which frameworks hide more than they reveal. If the above-mentioned questions can be answered then a flexible and reflective approach has been achieved (Gray, 2003: 22).

Cognizant of the above, the researcher engaged in a reflexive research process in the following ways. Firstly, the researcher engaged in many discussions of the project with colleagues – these discussions lead to numerous revisions. Secondly, the project was carried out under the auspices of the Water Research Commission (WRC), which appointed a project steering committee, known as a Reference Group. The researcher made a presentation to this Reference Group and integrated their input into the project planning and execution.

In the final instance, the researcher reflected on his motivation for undertaking this specific project, as well as on the values that he as an individual brings to the project. The researcher grew up in a female-headed household in a small South African town. The support and guidance of a strong mother enabled him to progress in life. As a result the researcher believes that the non-utilization of women's attributes and expertise, impoverishes society in general. This also results in resource leaks in the system, hindering the achievement of sustainable development.

3.7 Data analysis

According to Mitleton-Kelly (2003:5) common themes, dilemmas and key questions are used for context analysis interviews. Therefore, the data was analyzed through the linking of the themes in the literature review and those found in the stories told by the women.

Furthermore, in the analysis of the data, aspects such as the following were addressed: bifurcations, the impact of feedback loops and emergent patterns (Grbich, 2004:61).
3.8 Shortcomings and sources of error

The timing of the fieldwork was during the summer. This is the initiation time for girls and boys on their right of passage to womanhood and manhood. This meant that interviews had to be done in the early hours of the morning. As a result one participant did not show up and a substitute had to be made. This had financial implications as extra costs were incurred for the project in terms of accommodation and traveling.

When using the story telling technique for conducting qualitative research, is was from time to time necessary to indicate topics or themes where the narrator needed to focus to avoid repetition. Thus, at times the interviewee might have been lead with questions. This might have had an effect on the aspect of the interviewee telling her life story freely.

Because the narrators are different the topics they dwell on mostly were different. This is in accordance with how such themes affected their lives and therefore their views cannot be generalized, although similarities can be drawn from the stories.

3.9 Chapter Summary

In this chapter the discussion was on the tools and theory informing the research methodology. The following topics were explored namely, research design; the methods of data collection; ethics; validity and reliability; reflectivity; data analysis; errors and their sources.
4 ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY AREA

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter information is explored to contextualize the research study. Information supplied informs the study in terms of geographical information; socio-economics; culture and traditions; and leadership structures in the villages and on the projects.

The study area is in the Engcobo Local Municipality (ELM) which is one of the nine local municipalities that form the Chris Hani District Municipality (CHDM) in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. The CHDM is an amalgamation of three formerly separated administration entities namely, the former Transkei, the former Ciskei and the former Republic of South Africa (RSA) after the 1994 democratic election.

The interviews were conducted in the following villages that are part of the ELM: Rasmeni Village; Lwandlana Village and Khanyi Village.

This chapter provides information on the following dimensions of the study area:

- The geographical location
- Socio-economic characteristics
- Predominant traditional culture
- Leadership structures in the villages and on the projects

The aim of presenting this information is to illustrate the lifestyles and choices that are embedded within the society.
4.2 Geographical location

Engcobo is the only nodal small town where the offices of the ELM are situated. The area where the Engcobo town is based is predominantly made up of scattered traditional rural villages where people live on subsistence farming (Eberhard, 2006:18).

With a land cover of 37 111 km², the ELM has a climate that lies between two climatic zones namely, the arid and semi-arid moderate midlands; and arid and semi-arid cold high-lying land. The rainfall varies dramatically over the area depending mostly on altitude and the distance from the coast. The high-lying eastern area which ranges from Cofimvaba and Engcobo has an average annual precipitation of 700-800 mm. The greater part of the CHDM is arid to semi-arid receiving less than 400 mm of rain annually (Breedlove and Fraser, 2000).

Of the rainfall, 70-80% during the summer takes place during severe thunderstorms (Breedlove and Fraser, 2000). Incidents of hail storms and flooding rivers are very common, often resulting in the destruction of houses and property. Only 20-30% of rainfall occurs during the winter months and these rains usually result in snowfalls. According to Wood and Schoor (1976) in the early summer months the Engcobo area usually has severe dry spells which makes the early planting of agronomic crops risky because of possible crop failure through drought (Gibb, 2005:3-13).

4.3 Socio-economic characteristics

In the first instance the socio-economic characteristics of the ELM are given, where after the villages will be analyzed separately. The socio-economic information used has been obtained from the 2001 national census data (Census, 2001).

The following aspects will form the focus of the socio-economic analysis: population density and distribution; area’s education level and employment; income levels; migration patterns; sanitation and water infrastructure.
Where relevant, detail information is presented in Annexure A (for the ELM) and Annexure B (for the villages).

4.3.1 Engcobo Local Municipality (ELM)

*Population distribution and settlement*

The total population of the Engcobo Local Municipality (ELM) is 148 000 (Census, 2001). Of this population, 96% is based in the rural areas and 4% is based in the urban areas. About 35% of the ELM population is based on tribal settlements. Tribal settlement is a settlement in the rural section of ELM where the area is under the traditional leadership, examples are headmen, chiefs, kings etc. About 53% of the rural population is women. Of these rural women, 54% are found in tribal settlements.

Age-sex pyramids were constructed for the ELM and the three villages where the study was done. These age-sex pyramids display the percentage (or actual amount) of a population broken down by sex and age. The five-year age cohort increments on the y-axis allow the pyramid to vividly reflect long-term trends in the birth and death rates. Over the shorter term, it also reflects baby-booms, wars and epidemics (Rosenberg, 1997:1).

![Population Distribution](image)

**Figure 1: Age-sex distribution of the total population**
The percentage of the total population (urban and rural) that is female is 54% (see Figure 1). The ELM has a young population with 58% of the population younger than 20 years and 0.7% of the population over 60 years. This data enabled the researcher to calculate a dependency ratio which gives an indication of “the burden placed on people in their earning years by those dependent on them” (Claasen, 2004:19). The calculated dependency ratio is 1.23 as shown below:

\[
\text{Dependency Ratio} = \frac{\% \text{ persons under 15} + \% \text{ persons over 65+}}{\% \text{ person between 15 and 64}} \\
= \frac{43.6\% + 6.7\%}{40.9\%} \\
= 1.23
\]

This result indicates that there is a high burden on those of working age as there are more people who are not able to work (younger than 15 and retired), than people who are able to work.

This young population has 54% of women between the ages of 14-44 and they have the potential of giving birth and adding new individuals to the population.

The common migration pattern is from the rural to the urban, and this pattern may be influenced by both urban and rural development. As De Beer and Swanepoel (2000:23) stated, since independence in many African states most men left for the mines in the big cities, leaving women as the head of households in the rural areas. In order to highlight this aspect, an analysis on the 2001 census data was done, specifically focusing on the settlement of individuals in the same area over a five-year period.

There was not much difference in the mobility in terms of migrating patterns for the sexes in the ELM. In particular, 96% of females and 95% of males were still found in the same area at the end of the five-year period. The ages of these females and males
were between 15 and 59 years, which is the age group eligible for working or income generation. With specific reference to the females, their ages were between 15 and 44 years and they make up 12.92% of the total population.

*Education and income levels*

Of the ELM population, 46% are capable of working. However, in this area 81% of its population is without income, as shown in Figure 2.

![ELM Income Levels](image)

**Figure 2: ELM Income Distribution**

- **A** - Rural Male
- **B** - Urban Male
- **C** - Total Males
- **D** - Rural Females
- **E** - Urban Females
- **F** - Total Females
- **G** - Total Rural of both Sexes
- **H** - Total Urban of both Sexes

Of the women in the ELM, 64.08% are employed in community and social services, while 77.64% of the men work in the mining and agriculture sector.

As shown in Table 1 below, of the total population, 27% of the total population has not had any formal education, 58.12% of which are women. In the ELM, 50.2% of the women have gone through primary education. Conversely, the women also formed the most educated portion of the population, as they make up 64.74% of people who have educational qualification beyond high school.
Table 1: Education profile for the ELM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Males (%)</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Females (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Education</td>
<td>33,227</td>
<td>48.76%</td>
<td>33,542</td>
<td>50.24%</td>
<td>66,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Education</td>
<td>9,424</td>
<td>36.93%</td>
<td>16,094</td>
<td>63.07%</td>
<td>25,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>35.25%</td>
<td>1,618</td>
<td>64.75%</td>
<td>2,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No schooling</td>
<td>15,150</td>
<td>41.88%</td>
<td>21,030</td>
<td>58.12%</td>
<td>36,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58,683</td>
<td>44.81%</td>
<td>72,284</td>
<td>55.19%</td>
<td>130,967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Infrastructure: Sanitation and Water

In the ELM, 69.37% of the total population is without sanitation facilities. In the rural villages specifically, 20.15% of people have pit latrines, while the percentage of people with ventilated pit latrines (VIP) is 4.18%. In the urban area within the municipality, 2.68% of the households have flush toilets that are connected to the sewerage system as shown in Figure 3.

![Sanitation Facilities](image)

**Figure 3: Access to sanitation facilities for the ELM**

A- Flush toilet (connected to sewerage system); B- Flush toilet (with septic tank); C- Chemical toilet; D- Pit latrine with ventilation (VIP); E- Pit latrine without ventilation; F- Bucket latrine; G- No facilities exist.

Rivers (and streams) and springs are still the biggest sources of water in the rural areas of the ELM as 43.76% and 20.53% of rural households get their water from rivers and springs respectively. However, projects aimed at bringing clean water to the villages...
have begun with the installation of communal taps. According to policy, the taps should be located within a 200 meter radius of the households. In the tribal settlement areas, 11.46% of the households had taps situated at radii greater than the prescribed 200 meters. There are however, 6.31% of households in tribal settlements that have taps within the radius of 200 meters. The rest of the households obtain water from other sources, such as rivers and springs, as shown in Figure 4 below.

4.3.2 Summary of the socio-economic information for the three villages where the interviews took place

**Lwandlana Village**

*Population distribution*

The total population in the village is 642 individuals of which 55% are women. Lwandlana Village has a young population with 62% of the total population younger
than 20 years. Women of child-bearing years (15-44) make up 38.4 % of the population. The dependency ratio was calculated as 1.22, indicating a heavy burden on those who are in their working years.

*Education and income level*

In Lwandlana village, 78.42% of the population has no income. Of the people with no income, 60% are women. Although 57% of the total population has a primary-school education, (of which 46% are women), this education did not unlock employment opportunities.

Many people in the area are unemployed and survive on various informal forms of employment. This is especially true of men that were retrenched at the industrial factories and mines in the cities. The biggest employer in the village is the community, social and personal services sector whose impact is miniscule as it employs only 4.10% of the total population. Of those employed in this sector, 75% of are women. A third of the total population earns R1-R 400 per month.

*Infrastructure: Water and sanitation*

In Lwandlana Village, 88.8% of households obtain their drinking water from taps that are situated outside the stipulated 200 meters radius from the house. Of the households, 9.6% have yard connections and a further 9.6% have communal taps which are within the 200 meter radius from the households.

*Rasmeni Village*

*Population distribution*

Rasmeni Village has a young population with 60.87 % below the age of 20 years. Of the total village population, 54.7 % are females and of these, 43.7 % are in their child-
bearing years, and 53.6% are aged between 15 to 59 years making them capable of working. The dependency ratio of the village, which is 1.07, indicates a heavy burden on those who are able to work.

*Education and income level*

In Rasmeni Village, 63% of the total population has primary-school education. However, 50% of the women in the village did not have formal schooling. Consequently, few people are formally employed with 98% of the population earning a living in undefined sectors.

*Infrastructure: Water and sanitation*

About 94.6% of the households get their water from streams and rivers and some 5.4% of households get their water from street vendors. This is similar to the situation with sanitation infrastructure as 47% of households have no toilets, while 26.5% have pit latrine toilets without ventilation. Of the households, 11% have new Ventilation Improved Pit (VIP) latrines that have been installed on a project by Mvula Trust (a large NGO working in the water services sector).

*Khanyi Village*

*Population distribution*

In Khanyi Village, 50% of the population are women, and of these 43.5% are in their child-bearing years. The population of Khanyi Village comprises 54% individuals younger than 20 years of age and 9% of 60 years and older, indicating a low life expectancy. The village has 47.8% people who are in their working years. The dependency ratio has been calculated as 1.03.
**Education and income level**

In Khanyi Village 17.5 % of the total population did not receive formal schooling and of these, 61.4% are women. However, 58 % of the people in the village have attended primary school and 66.7 % of women in the village have attended secondary school. Of the population, 80.5 % are not formally employed, and 75% of the women who are employed, are employed in the social, community and personal services sectors.

**Infrastructure: Water and sanitation**

In Khanyi Village, 51.96 % of the households have no toilet facilities. Of the households, 16.6 % have pit latrine without ventilation. Through a project of the municipality, 31.4% households have been provided with VIP latrines. Of the households in the area, 93.7 % get their water from springs, and the rest (6.3%) get their water from boreholes.

### 4.4 Information on cultural traditions

#### 4.4.1 Traditional leadership structure of AmaXhosa society

The AmaXhosa people are the second largest ethnic group in South Africa with 7.9 million people (Census, 2001). Their ancestors settled in the Easter Cape region of the present-day South Africa during the Bantu people’s southward migration 2 000 years ago.

The Xhosa nation is composed of chiefdoms that are loosely based on familial clans. The two oldest chiefdoms are Gcaleka and Rharhabe who claim to be direct descendents of Tshawe (who as a chief united the people to eventually become the Xhosa nation) (NRHI, 2004: 15).
The other chiefdoms are Thembu, Bomvana, Mpondo, Mpondomise and those chiefdoms from the Mfengu which include Bhaca, Bhele, Zizi, Hlubi and Qwathi. The Mfengu chiefdoms were absorbed into the Xhosa nation in the mid-1800s (NRHI, 2004: 15).

Each chiefdom is lead by a paramount chief or King in a line that is established by birthright to eldest son of the First or Great Wife. A chiefdom consists of a number of clans which are basically extended families, and each of these families is headed by a patriarch.

The paramount chief rules over several small territories that consist of small familial clans (NRHI, 2004: 15). Each territory is ruled by a headman (lesser chief) who may be related to the paramount chief. The headmen have little contact with the paramount chief and administer their territories as they see fit and they are free to resolve disputes within the villages (NRHI, 2004: 15).

Colonialism destroyed this chiefdom system. Through government intervention, for instance the 1970s homeland policy, illegitimate chiefs were installed in many areas. After the birth of the new constitution post-1994, legitimate heirs were re-installed in their respective chiefdoms. Now they only enjoy ceremonial powers and few are directly involved in politics.

Traditional leadership is recognized under Chapter 12 (Sections 1 and 2) of the South African Constitution as a legitimate functional institution at local level. Chapter 12 Section 2 stipulates that traditional leadership is recognized as an institution whose function is governed by the local customary laws (RSA Constitution Chapter 12, 1996 and NRHI, 2004: 15).
4.4.2 The custom of lobola

In the Xhosa nation cattle are a valuable commodity as they are used to plough fields, and are slaughtered in religious and social ceremonies. Most importantly cattle are used in the lobola traditional custom (NRHI, 2004:16).

According to Shope (2006, 65), lobola/lobolo is an enduring custom that offers insight into past and present gender and power relations. This custom survived colonial and missionary cultural attacks as well as the current changing political and economic structures. Despite efforts to regulate and shape the practice through the colonial customary laws, lobola endured and its persistence is indicative of its ability to adapt to socio-political context.

In the past lobola forged a relational bond among families as it was celebrating the addition of the woman to the husband’s family. During the lobola negotiation processes families are brought together, united and thereby creating a web of affiliations that stretches across generations in both rural and urban locales (Shope 2006:66).

Rural African women viewed lobola as an affirmation of women’s value and a symbol of respect upholding the worthiness of the woman. Before 1994, the tradition conveyed to black women a source of identity and a richness of connections. It could not be conquered by the then socio-political conditions that stripped African people of their dignity. Lobola was therefore one of the sources of symbolic capital available to black women and it was all they had. Without alternative sources of symbolic capital, African women tend to cling to lobola for the respect and dignity it confers and the interdependence it cultivates among families (Shope, 2006:66).

With the encroachment of colonial capitalism, especially after the passing of the 1913 Native Land Act, many black Africans were pushed off their land into the wage market. This resulted in migration of men from rural to urban areas in search of employment.
The introduction of a market economy dependent on migrant labour resulted in new mechanisms for securing resources in the form of cattle, money and consumer goods. The migration of men to work on farms and in the mines and factories increased the women’s responsibilities as they were now managing households. These new roles for women resulted in an organic shift in the traditional gender roles within the family spheres (Shope, 2006: 68; NRHI, 2004: 16).

The new types of recourses were now used as substitute for cattle in lobola negotiations to formalize matrimonial ties. The amount of money and goods are still calculated to correspond to a number of head of cattle, but the dynamics between families, men and women have changed. The symbolism of the previously emphasized relational interdependence and respect is threatened by the commodification of lobola (Shope, 2006: 68).

Under capitalism, the market, rather than the elders, sets the pace and timing for lobola. This means that for a younger generation their access to resources to negotiate and formalize matrimonial ties is quite limited (Shope, 2006:68).

While lobola has symbolic currency for women in the form of respect and status, it also symbolically and materially binds women to a patriarchal authority structure. So it means that if a man has not paid lobola and the woman is not happy with the conditions, she can easily go back home (Shope, 2006: 68).

4.4.3 Religion and spirituality

While a few continue to practice traditional religion, most Xhosas today are Christians. Regardless of their inclination and their level of education many people still continue to place a high importance on ancestral spirits. Some continue to consult traditional healers and Sangomas. The arrival of European Christian missionaries in the Eastern Cape in the 1800s resulted in conversion of the people that lasted till the 1950s (NRHI,
This later caused a rift in society, particularly between the converted and schooled people (amaggobhoka) and those who were practicing traditional ancestral worship and had no formal school education (amaqaba abomvu/abantu ababomvu). The term for the latter group is translated as “the people who smear themselves with red clay as a commitment to their ancestors” (NRHI, 2004:17).

One of the traditions that have not been lost by the Xhosa people is the ritual initiation and the right of passage for boys and girls before they are considered as adults. The ceremonies of ukwaluka (boys) and intonjane (girls) are when boys of around 18 years and girls of about 16 years are separated from the rest of the community. Accompanied by adults, male initiates are circumcised and taught important customs and responsibilities in society (NRHI, 2004: 16).

4.5 Leadership structures in the villages and on the projects
As already indicated, each village has a headman. Some of his responsibilities involve solving internal disputes between villagers and the allocation of land for building houses for newly married couples. The headman has a deputy, called “ibhodi” who acts as his adviser and as a liaison officer between the headman and the villagers.

Since time immemorial in the ELM rural villages leadership and community meetings consisted only of men who used to hold gatherings at the headman’s homestead next to the kraal. These gatherings were called “Imbizo”. At these gatherings important decisions were taken in the absence of women even if what was being discussed would affect the women directly. The only time women were only allowed to attend was when they were to give evidence on a dispute.

The advent of a democratic social order post-1994 brought changes which resulted in the addition of another dimension to rural leadership. This came in the form of the democratically elected ward councilors who are village representatives at the Engcobo Local Municipality Council (ELMC). Service delivery and development are being facilitated by the ELMC through the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) processes,
and the councilor carries the village’s mandate on their behalf. Later, a Village Working Committee of democratically elected community members was formed. The village working committee is a community structure which helps the elected ward councilor and the headman with initiating and driving development projects. These community representatives help the councilor in organizing meetings for the IDP public participation activities to ensure that there is community buy-in into the development processes. Initially, this committee was dominated by men, but now women are also being elected by the community to serve on this committee - especially after the introduction of the principle of female representivity in development projects.

With the arrival of Mvula Trust (a water-sector NGO) there was a review of the Village Working Committee gender representation. This review also involved the Community Service Provider Committee (CSPC) for the water project. The CSPC is an elected structure of community members that would assist the community in running the water project after they received training under the leadership of the Mvula Trust development officers. The committee has a constitution which was drafted by the community and vetted by the NGO. The CSPC comprises a chairperson, secretary and treasurer. The committee members are given training by the NGO (Eberhard, 2006: 23).

4.6 Chapter Summary

In the preceding chapter the study area is analyzed in order to highlight what informs the lifestyle and choices embedding the ELM society. Initially the geographical information and socio-economic information of the ELM and the study sites was discussed. To enlighten some more, the predominant cultural aspects and leadership structures that exists within the area was discussed. To these topics are sub-topics that went in depth on history and customs of the customs and traditions practiced by the people in this area.
5 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA: THE STORIES OF THE FIVE WOMEN INVOLVED IN WATER SERVICES PROJECTS

5.1 Introduction
This chapter contains the data of the research study in the form of in-depth interviews. These interviews are in the form of narratives (stories) told by these women about their lives and involvement in the water projects around the villages of Engcobo Local Municipality.

5.2 The story of Maduna

**Family and early years:** Maduna was born in May 1955 at her grandparent’s farm, Mhlunguthi, on the outskirts of Elliot. She is the first born of the six children her mother, Nowinile, and father, Mlanduli, had been blessed with.

On this farm, Maduna started her lower grades. As the oldest of the siblings, many responsibilities were on her shoulders, for instance preparing food for her siblings before and after school, herding the livestock, cooking and helping with cleaning of the homestead. As Thandiwe (Maduna’s younger sister) got older the work load was lessened as she assisted her elder sister with doing some chores within the household. With so many responsibilities and work to do at home for a day, there was no time for socializing. This meant that the only times friendships were made was at school, when herding livestock and when fetching wood or water.

As the firstborn Maduna was the first in her family to attend a lower primary school to do her lower grades at Masizakhe Township which is a peri-urban area on the outskirts of Elliot. This was the time her father got a job to work for the Cape Provincial Administration (CPA).
It was later, Maduna did her junior high school (grade 9) at Quthubeni Village and subsequently fell pregnant in 1983 with her first child Vuyokazi. In 1984 she went to study at Jumba High School in Mthatha to do her standard 10 and this is when her boyfriend asked her for her hand in marriage. She loved school very much and wanted to be social worker.

**Lifestyle and community:** Like many other families in that area, Maduna’s family lived on subsistence livestock and crops farming. The patriarchal system was dominant in her community and was often visible at home as her father would ensure that it was clear that whatever was done was unanimously his view as the head of the household. Most families were illiterate (Bomvu) and going to school was either not common, or people went to school late in their years. Some parents saw taking kids to school as a waste of time. Such parents saw no importance in education as it was a challenge to their way of doing things and they would say it was for the civilized (Gqobhoka).

Community meetings (Imbizos) are usually held at the headman’s homestead, and those days community meetings were only attended by men, and women were prohibited to attend, even if the issues discussed affected their lives directly namely, land, water etc. Nonetheless, the community had strong social capital characterized by strong social networks grounded on the philosophy that, “Every person young and old has an important role to play in the community but you must know your place”. That philosophy bred respect for elders and for humanity, and this gave rise to a sense of unity within the village.

As a young girl Maduna would from time-to-time undergo virginity testing. She admits that this pressured her not to involve herself sexually with boys because if caught, she would have been given a hiding. She gave credit to this ancient ritual for what it did for her and for her second-born daughter who was stayed with her grandmother until she finished high school. According to Maduna, her own lack of virginity testing skills has lead to her eldest daughter having two kids. For this reason Maduna maintains that
parents should be allowed to conduct the ritual on their children and that it should not be illegalized.

**Relationship with mother:** Her mother was a domestic worker. Maduna had a tough upbringing as her mother was very strict with her and her younger siblings. Her mother was very aggressive, and if people did not listen she would not hesitate to beat them. Her mother was sometimes very harsh on her when instilling discipline and she would think that she didn’t love her. She remembers how her mother used to make them share food by dishing up for all six of the siblings in the same dish.

From time to time young maidens would undergo virginity testing. Her mother used to tell her that as the eldest daughter of the family they are very proud of her and she was their flower so she must keep herself pure.

She is thankful that her mother was harsh on her for if that had not been the case, she thinks that she wouldn’t have been the person she is at the moment. Her mother was responsible for instilling good values, discipline, and cultural norms related to being a good Xhosa (African) woman. To this day, Maduna is still friends with her mother.

**Relationship with her father:** She became close to her father because her mother was often harsh and unapproachable. As a result, her father was not happy when her in-laws asked for her hand and was hesitant to let go of her. Her father did eventually accept it, as his daughter was in love with the husband-to-be.

As her father was a gentle person, he was accessible to her and he would explain to her everything she asked him. Much of what they talked about related to the importance of indigenous knowledge regarding farming both livestock and crop; traditions and culture; as well as and history.

**Marriage:** In 1985 when she was 30 years old, Maduna got married to the Matshana family of Manye Village. She married the father of her first-born child Vuyokazi and they
were blessed with three children. When they got married, her husband he was not working and things were tough. Eventually, he got a job at All Saint Hospital and later at the Department of Transport at Mthatha. Maduna says: “Although getting a job was great for my family, my mother-in-law demanded that her son (my husband) support her and my father-in-law even though they still received their pension government grant”.

What was very bad was that Maduna’s husband was very promiscuous and was involved with a woman from the neighborhood whom he eventually impregnated. He was also accused by another woman he was involved with in Mthatha of impregnating her, and that was even worse for Maduna. This woman took Maduna’s husband to court to force him to pay maintenance for her child. The case was thrown out of court. Maduna was present in court next to her husband. She says that during these hard times she didn’t receive any support from her mother-in-law as she seemed to like what her son was doing. Her brothers-in-law gave her the support she needed, especially her husband’s older brother who kept on encouraging her to be strong when things were not going well in marriage. Because of how her husband was doing things, at that time she wouldn’t have been surprised, had he taken a second wife.

She opted to be with the husband in Mthatha where he was working and started attending school to do her grade 11 (Standard 9). She did not finish as she became tired of the city life and decided to return back to the village. She says that she is a hands-on, rather than an academic, person.

It is traditionally acceptable that the man is the head of the household and all others (the man’s children and the wife as well) were viewed as the man’s children. Maduna’s husband’s role was that of provider and she was managing the household in his absence. Although she is not working, Maduna hints strongly that it doesn’t give her husband the right to do as he pleases or to take any decision without consulting her on issues concerning their household.
Building houses the indigenous way is a skill women pass from generation to generation in rural areas and Maduna has built a few rooms with the help of other women through the "bilima" concept.

**Her role in the community:** The community to which she was married is not different from where she came from - it is patriarchal and women are excluded from community decision making. She is a hands-on and compassionate person who is enlightened about social issues. She has helped people who are struggling and being abused by relatives by personally referring them to social workers as she has no money to help them herself. This kind of behavior has caused her to be both loved and hated in the community. Some people say that she was not born in the village, and yet now she wants to run forward to right the wrong.

She says that in the village very few people have UBUNTU - even members of her church (Zion Christian Church). She says that people who pray are cruel, have no mercy and have no patience for helping someone in trouble. She comments on her qualities by giving credit to God for giving her the heart she has, and she credits the way she was brought up, for teaching her the value of sharing.

**Her role in the water project:** This is a process where the community members, especially the female members, get together to help each other by devoting time and energy to domestic projects like building and working the fields. It is through working together that the following are achieved: work time is reduced; and social bonds and social cohesion are strengthened. With the interaction between young and the old (and sometimes males would join in the activities) this is one of important institutions responsible for indigenous knowledge transfer. This is done in good faith as people would offer their skills moving from household to household for the benefit of the whole village. This practice is grounded on the "ubuntu" concept of humanity.
would offer their skills moving from household to household for the benefit of the whole village. This practice is grounded on the “ubuntu” concept of humanity.

Maduna served as a Community Service Provider (CSP), a structure that was set up by the community in consultation with the ward councilor to ensure their full participation in the water projects brought by the Mvula Trust in 2003/4. As part of a drive by the national government to bring clean water to rural areas, in 1994 a civil engineering contractor was tasked to install a water system at Khanye Village. Without the community’s consultation, the names of some people who were interested to work on digging trenches for pipes were submitted to the civil contractor through the headman. After the installation of the pipes, it became evident that the taps were too widely scattered and later some taps ran dry. After months of hard work, the contractor left the job unfinished – in addition to the dry taps, some pipes were still sticking out of the ground.

In 2004 a community meeting was held at the headman’s homestead to elect members of the Community Service Providers (CSP) structure for the village. It was emphasized that the structure should be gender representative. Maduna was elected as the secretary of the three-member management structure which consisted of two women (Secretary and Treasury) and one man (Chairperson). Mvula Trust sent them to Engcobo Town Hall on a training exercise on water resource management, bookkeeping, organizational roles and the power of office. On their return from the training, they started volunteering and in 2005 at a meeting with Mvula Trust officials they asked for a stipend (R135.00) to assist them in doing their job properly. The money was used to buy airtime to make emergency calls, and for transport to meetings and workshops.

Notwithstanding the fact that the women were elected by the people, men were often uncooperative and difficult to deal with. Manduna had to stand her ground by first ensuring that people understand the rules of the project as far as the promotion of public participation (women included) is concerned. The reluctance showed by some
men to be addressed by women was because of cultural rules and regulations. At times men would use their women to fight the “female dominance” by telling their wives that these CSP women address them as if they were other women, and not men.

Progress was again stalled by the technical operator who was an old man who sometimes refused to follow instruction from the younger women. He would sometimes do whatever duties he felt like. The sad thing was that most of the duties falling under the Technical Operator needed to be addressed urgently, for instance fixing broken pipes (especially after heavy rains), closing leaking taps and pipes, and checking for blocked pipes by going up the hill where the water sources (springs) are. After many disappointments of the technical operator not showing up for work, or sometimes having excuses, the two women went up the hill to look at how the water connection system worked.

Manduna’s experiences of men’s involvement in the water project: As the project ground rules required gender equality, discontentment grew among some of the men involved in the projects, especially with the aspect of women in leadership positions. Because of this, some men would often grumble in meetings when women were giving their inputs or sometimes giving them orders on what needs to be done during the project processes.

Because of the differences in the ways women and men define development, Manduna noticed that the majority of men in the village often took part in a project if there was financial compensation. Many times the point of departure for discussion for the men would be how much money the project will pay and this was often accompanied by a lack of interest in volunteering.

Contrary to that, women were very active in ensuring that projects will ultimately result in a better life for all. This was made possible through their active participation, and their visionary ideas, as well as their having a developmental mindset with no expectations of
instant results. As a result many women were prepared to volunteer as long as the as the objectives of the projects were realized in terms of a positive impact on welfare, health and later economic opportunities.

**Integrating her upbringing and life with her role in the project:** From an early age Manduna learned about the ups and downs of relationships by observing her parent’s marriage. Her parent would often disagree but would thereafter sort out their disputes by dealing with the facts (she referred to this as “truth”), rather than the emotions. This experience has helped her during her adult life to remain patient and grounded when facing challenges, be it in her marriage or managing the water projects. Therefore, dealing with gender stereotypes is not impossible for her, as the only thing she deals with are facts rather than being emotional. Furthermore, the qualities she learnt at home namely, patience, perseverance and nurturing skills have positively influenced her management style.

Growing up as a first-born child who was responsible for taking care of her siblings in her mother’s absence, honed her sense of responsibility. Furthermore, as a first-born child, all daily chores were placed on her shoulders and she was also responsible for teaching some skills (tending livestock, milking cows, working in the fields, etc.) to her siblings. All these responsibilities also honed her leadership skills. These leadership skills blossomed when she got involved in the projects. Her parents raised her on the values of respecting people no matter their economic status, to be disciplined, especially to people you do not know, to embrace the ubuntu value system, respect old people, and honour mother and fathers (either yours or strangers by showing respect). These values help her to interact with people in the community and on the projects.

Part of her training by both parents at home was to prepare her for her future in marriage so that she could be able to run her own homestead well and understand what is expected from a woman in marriage. The character molding that she got from home helped her when she got married as things changed after a few years. The values of
knowing that marriage is not a bed of roses and that things do not always go smoothly helped her in making her marriage work. She respected her in-laws as her own parents because of how she was taught at home. She later admitted that when things were not going well in her marriage she realized that what was keeping her in her homestead was her children.

When her husband was working in Mthatha she was the person running the household. There were cultural rules that sometimes hindered her from performing other jobs in the household. For instance, traditional law does not allow women to enter or come close to the kraal, and this hindered her from driving her livestock in her husband’s absence. She had to ask her husband’s younger brothers or young boys from around the village to drive the cattle to the kraal in the evening and to lock the gate or open in the morning so she could drive them to the veld to graze. From time-to-time her husband reminds her that he is the head and all are his children and he further quotes the bible, saying that this situation was ordained by God.

She further noticed that the effectiveness of women in these projects is due to the love they have for their communities because of their motherly instinct. Women seek to see the situation where they are, thinking how they can improve and add to that. In their village, men are not trustworthy and are very lazy. This fact that women have the information they gained from training gives them the confidence to voice their opinions and to take a stand. When this makes men aggressive, the women should just stick to the facts and in this manner, the “head and tail” debate becomes irrelevant.

Traditionally and by cultural norm women are not allowed to speak in imbizos, especially when this is taking place at headman’s place because that is done close to the kraal. Because of the ground rules on gender equity and the participation of women set by Mvula Trust Officials at the beginning of the project, women had the confidence to speak out for themselves. However, some men still come with the patriarchal mentality that they are heads in their households. Manduna’s ability to address men in meetings is in part a tribute to her mother’s aggressiveness when she was raising her -
being elected to other structures, being trained and having access to information have also greatly aided her in her work on the projects.

Manduna thinks that the qualities she has are a gift from God but that these can be taught to other young women who intend to be involved in water projects. However, she complains that the young women in her village are not interested in learning and want things that come easily. Conducting workshops is one tool that can be used to get the right messages across to women.

5.3 Zoleka’s story

Family and early years: Zoleka is the first born of six children by Ndumiso and Nomfundiso Gogwana in Quthubeni Village. Although they had been born of illiterate parents, Zoleka’s parents had an abundance of indigenous knowledge that helped them to raise their children.

The family made a living as subsistence farmers of crops and livestock. Allocation of house chores by both parents was not gender based and her chores included milking cattle, tending livestock, stamping mielies, sieving manure for fertilizing the fields, and fetching wood. Her father taught her how to put cattle on yokes, use plough and planters, and how to pull sledges. When her father was absent due to work in Cape Town, her mother used to run the household.

Father’s role in Zoleka’s life: Zoleka’s father was very strict and had a strong personality. He was very knowledgeable regarding indigenous knowledge and played a significant role in community affairs. Because of these attributes the community was saddened by his passing on. On the contrary, his family didn’t feel the same as he would sometimes beat Zoleka’s mother up when they had a disagreement - especially when the disagreement concerned his acts of promiscuity. Zoleka’s mother would pack her bags and run away from the beating to her home, leaving the children unattended.
Zoleka’s father was not supportive of education as he believed that educated people are crooks and that the mind created by God doesn’t need upgrading or additional knowledge as it can do all that is necessary to help him survive. This thinking made it hard for his children as he would go and fetch them from school right in the middle of the day. He would tell the teacher that the child is his and his cattle needed to be fetched from the mountain. Although her father was an abusive husband, he did not discriminate on the basis of gender regarding work – he taught Zoleka a lot of traditionally male chores like using the plough and planter in the fields. Her father’s principle was that hands can do any work and that work knows no gender.

The Gogwana’s were a respected family in the community because of her father’s activism on community issues and his working hard to sustain his family. Some community members were taking him as an example for the young of how a man should be as his homestead’s livestock was growing and fields were being worked.

**Mother’s role in Zoleka’s life:** Although Zoleka’s father was against education, her mother loved teaching and encouraged her children to go to school despite the disruption her husband would cause when around. As uneducated and illiterate as Zoleka’s mother was, her aims and hopes were that her children be educated.

Her mother was a very strong, strict and hard-working woman. As a result of her not having had children for the first 10 years of her marriage, she was experienced in household chores. She transferred these skills to her children as she was always at home with them. Even though she was illiterate she could count the livestock and knew when all the animals were not in the kraal. When animals went missing, the punishment varied from being smeared with salty water before being beaten up, to the extreme punishment for the offender to go and sleep in the kraal with the livestock. Zoleka’s younger brothers were taught how to grind amabele for making home-brewed beer. Although this is culturally women’s work, she insisted that the boys have no wives. She
used to tell them that knowing how to do work creates independence, and respect and tolerance for humanity.

Although her mother ran away to her home when there were disagreements between the wife and husband, later this option was not open to her anymore. Things became sour between her mother and her mother’s brother as he and his wife drink a lot. This has made it impossible for her to go home, and so Zoleka’s mother remained at the mercy of her husband.

**Schooling:** At school Zoleka was very active in sports (netball and athletics) and in choral music. Nonetheless, her father used to ask for her in the middle of the day so that she could go and fetch the livestock from the mountain where they were grazing. Despite the humiliation, as this would be done in full view of her classmates and teachers, she would go and tend the livestock. It was only her mother who wanted her kids to be educated. To her father education was a waste of time, as to him it was irrelevant to the development of their rural lifestyle.

Nevertheless, she continued at school until her father told her he was arranging for her to get married to someone she did not know. Zoleka did not wait for that to happen but ran away to villages she had never been to. After having been away from home for two months, she had to return home. The reason was that the people with whom she took refuge wanted to arrange for her to marry someone because of the way she was working. One of the criteria for a girl being taken for marriage those days was how well she worked within the household. So after refusing to be married to yet another stranger, Zoleka returned home and stayed with her family.

Soon she was back at school as the teachers asked her parents to send her back to school. But that did not last long, because another marriage arrangement came. This time, tired of running, she thought that this was what her parents wanted her to do and she respected their wishes and at the age of 16 years she got married.
Marriage: In May 1984 Zoleka got married to the family of her husband after a lobola (of nine cows) was sent to her family. Even though she didn’t know the man she was marrying, she stayed at the new house and did not run away as she respected her parent’s wishes. Initially she was not used to the new environment as things were different from home. The father-in-law was strict and the mother-in-law abused alcohol. Those days drinking alcohol was not a common thing for women to do. So this was strange to Zoleka as her own mother did not drink alcohol.

Her mother-in-law was also not friendly to Zoleka, and she was not fond of people. As Zoleka came from a warm home with frequent visitors, she was not used to this isolated life style. She was not allowed to participate in any community occasions unless allowed by her mother-in law who did not give her permission to attend. Instead of that, the mother-in-law set down rules for her on her arrival that were strange, unnecessary and made no sense to her. These rules were for instance that Zoleka was never allowed to greet all her in-laws by a hand shake, she was not allowed to wash her father-in-law’s clothes and linen, and she was not allowed to sweep or clean the father-in-law’s side of the in-law’s bedroom.

Meanwhile the mother-in-law did not do anything to ensure that her husband was taken care of because she was always drunk. This situation saddened Zoleka and caused her to break these rules by washing the linen and clothes for the father-in-law, and sweeping his side of the room.

During this time Zoleka’s husband returned to Johannesburg where he was working on the mines. Zoleka took over where she left off at home by tending the livestock, and by ploughing and planting the fields of her new home. This brought delight to the father-in-law’s heart and he called her aside to thank her for her good work. He told her that the reason why he had arranged the marriage with her father was as she is such a good worker and that she should continue to help her mother-in-law. During this time Zoleka’s father-in-law was working in Engcobo Town as a mechanic. Her mother-in-law slowly stopped her drinking habits and started going to church.
Like herself, Zoleka’s husband was the first born in his family, and traditionally a male first born is the heir. All other children, except when they are too young, have to leave the household after getting married, thereby leaving their eldest son with his wife behind to take care of the parents.

Zoleka’s marriage was blessed with four children. From time to time Zoleka would leave the village to visit her husband in Johannesburg and her husband would also come home during the December holidays. When she went on her trips to Johannesburg she made sure that she came back before planting time during spring or early summer. Zoleka treated her in-laws with respect as she would her biological parents, and she regarded them as her parents and even if she was scolded by one of them for a mishap, she kept quiet.

Initially, Zoleka’s husband sent all the cash to his mother and when Zoleka needed anything she would ask her mother-in-law for it. Back home she was not used to having money and so to her, this situation was a continuation of the situation at home.

Zoleka’s father-in-law told her husband to look for a piece of land close by so that they can move and live on their own. With her husband working and sending money she started to build a few houses on their stand with the help of other women in the village. Later her father in law went to work in Elliott a small town situated 60 kilometers from Engcobo and he stayed in an informal settlement where the government later built houses. In Elliott Zoleka’s father-in-law had livestock and he farmed around there.

During this time the father-in-law got ill - he collapsed and could not remember anything thereafter. Zoleka and her husband took her father-in-law to a hospital in Johannesburg where the doctors failed to discover what was wrong with him. However, the father-in-law came back home after he got a little better from his sickness, but sadly passed on at work after a few days back home. With the father-in-law gone, the relations between
Zoleka and her mother-in-law became more strained, as the father-in-law was the person who wanted Zoleka to be the son’s wife in the first place.

Zoleka was accused by her mother-in-law of stealing the family’s livestock that was in Elliot. A fight broke out, causing her mother-in-law to press charges and Zoleka was sent to jail. After a few court appearances, the case was struck of the roll because the mother-in-law did not turn up for the court proceedings.

When Zoleka was on her own in her own house, her eyes were opened and she started attending community events. This changed her life. She joined a micro-finance organization that helped her in acquiring cutlery and plates for her new homestead. Meanwhile her husband was sending her money that she used to buy livestock, as her father-in-law told her before he passed on that a homestead is nothing without livestock. She started ploughing and planting her field as she used to do back home. During the past harvest time she won 50 bags of maize from her field. She used this for subsistence and she also sold some for income generation.

**Zoleka’s involvement in the water project:** In 1994 a contractor came through the ward councilor to install taps as part of the government’s drive of bringing clean water to rural areas. After a meeting at the headman’s homestead, a list was drawn up of people who were to dig trenches for the piping system. After pipes were installed some taps were put in place. During the consultation phase of the project, the men of the village were very vocal and there was no platform for women to express their needs. A committee was elected to help the contractor in organizing the manual labor, as well as to decide where to pipes should go and where taps should be set. In this committee of six people there was only one woman, and the results of that showed as the taps were far from the houses. After some time some of the taps ran dry and people returned to the river to fetch water.

In 2004 a campaign called Gcinamanzi was introduced to the village with a meeting at the headman’s homestead. Officials from Mvula Trust were part of the meeting and they
told the villages that their area of intervention was to renovate the existing water infrastructure and to make sure that it worked. Two committees were elected at the meeting, namely a Community Services Providers Committee (seven members) and a Village Working Committee (four members). It was made clear that the committees should be gender representative and thus four female CSPs were elected. Of these four women, three were elected to the management structure of the water project. Zoleka was elected as secretary of the structure in her absence - she was not present because of being busy with other projects. Even though she opposed the nomination, the people wanted her there. At the time the people were participating as volunteers in the projects. The CSPs were sent for training on water project management, bookkeeping, principles of Batho Pele, communication, etc.

She took up the post although she knew that it was going to be a challenge as she said that when something concerns people then you must know that there is difficulty coming there. The Technical Operator (TO) of the project was elected by the village and trained by the Mvula Trust to take care of the technical aspects of the water projects. After his training, the TO became resistant to the committee’s orders, and he was especially resistant to orders from the two women. Sometimes they had to go and fetch him out of the shebeen to come and do his work. His drinking fellows would put pressure on him by asking him if he takes orders from women.

As an exercise of sharing of experiences, Mvula Trust officials would call all committees of the water projects of the Engcobo District to the town hall to discuss issues pertaining to management, challenges encountered by other CSPs and to share information of how others dealt with the same problems. After one of the Mvula Trust officials told the CSPs that the organization was willing to give the CSPs a small stipend, the amount of the stipend was discussed. It became obvious that some of these committee members were struggling to make it to meetings because of not having money for transport and they also struggled to communicate with Mvula Trust, for instance in emergencies such as when a pipe bursts. Before the stipend was given to the CSPs and the TO, Mvula
Trust officials asked the members if they were prepared to face the community as they might be called names by them.

Challenges within the water projects ranged from sexism to insolence as anonymous people would sometimes call her cell phone and swear at her when some of the taps had run dry. Yet, even in such instances she never thinks of giving up her work as it means a lot to her that her community is drinking clean water.

Many people are involved in quite a number of projects within the community, such as a Tuberculosis treatment project, HIV/AIDS home-based care, chicken farming, and a bakery project. Because some people are wearing uniforms as part of their work on their projects, they give themselves a status that is close to that of nurses. In this way they undermine other people involved in other projects and make them feel less important. This situation also goes as far as people not abiding by the rules set by the village of being respectful when talking to CSP members. Especially women who were involved in other community development projects often would show disrespect to the management structure and would thus undermine their authority.

Just a note for capturing somewhere: the role of other women in subjugating women is one of the major themes in feminist literature – here this theme surfaces in this story.

**Zoleka reflecting on her upbringing:** Although it had patriarchal characteristics the community was held close by a shared common value system of ubuntu, interdependence and respect for all humanity. In the village people abided by the African traditional belief systems that worship God through the ancestors, although these traditions were supplemented by the Christian religion. The way of living prescribed by religion reinforced and perpetuated gender inequality in this community as men were taken as the head of the families, thereby devaluing women.

Women had no platform to voice how they feel or what they thought of developments affected their lives directly or indirectly that most of the time. Bearing children in
matrimony is very important for different reasons. Because boys are naturally physically strong they would help with the fieldwork (plough and plant fields) and girls would be trained to do household chores (cooking, plastering the floor and walls with cow dung etc) so that they can make good wives. A woman was valued on what kind of training she went through before getting married, namely household work, good manners, discipline, humility etc.

When Zoleka was growing up her parents always taught to her to tell the truth (stick to the facts). Both parents played a very big role in her life and they made her the person who she is today. Looking back, she doesn’t approve of everything her parents did, especially her very strict father’s belief that intimidation and beating a child are the only ways of making a child obedient; that education makes crooks of good people; that the place of girl is in marriage on the parent’s terms; and that every person is able to make anything of his life just based on indigenous knowledge without modern education being added to it.

Her mother was sometimes beaten by her father because he felt guilty as he was promiscuous and he always wanted reasons to go out of the house and to have relationships openly. In spite of that, her mother was a strong and a wise woman who took care of the homestead when her father was away to work in Cape Town. She taught and encouraged her children to do house chores and to go to school, and she instilled good values in them such as ubuntu, discipline, respect for other people, respect for elders, taking care of herself as a young woman, and to have respect for education. Although, traditionally chores were divided according to gender (male or female), at her home there was no such division, just a rotation of different chores among all the children, both boys and girls to keep things running smoothly in the household. All of these many influences made her the person she is and helped her to survive the challenges of marriage posed by her in-laws.

**Zoleka’s opinion on cultural traditions and the water projects:** Culturally, only men were allowed to attend a community meeting and it was only when giving evidence
under strict regulations that women were allowed in community meetings. This had created stereotypical thinking such as that there is nothing much to be expected from women because their place is at the fire place. This mindset was tamed by the government’s legislating on gender equality. Although men show their resistance informally by mumbling, there is nothing they can do because these changes come from above. Zoleka thinks that men are not giving women a platform to speak out because the men think it is the right thing to do, but because they have to comply with government policy.

Adding to this, Zoleka thinks that as a woman she has the responsibility to use her own mind. She has to understand that some rules/regulations are set for a particular context and have thus become irrelevant. She further sites instances where she broke rules that she did not see the point of, such as not eating harvest coming from the garden because the great grandfather had been buried in the garden, not coming close to the kraal, not shaking the in-law’s hands when greeting, and not cleaning the father-in-law’s clothes and room.

Zoleka acknowledges the importance of culture as the guiding principle of a nation but says that rules can be interpreted in such as way as to hinder or to facilitate the progress of women. Women who grew up before and during her time accepted the treatment of being “slaves” rather than partners, in marriage. Therefore, when changes were legally introduced, men became resistant. Inequality and inequity were accepted in the old days when there was nobody to contest them, and to some extent, the democratic changes have divided the community between those who are against change and those who support change.

Although Zoleka supports the changes democracy has brought, she does have some reservation on issues such as lobola. She supports lobola and does not see it as an agent of male domination; and although this can easily be labeled as child abuse, she wants children to be beaten at home and school. Zoleka’s stand point is therefore that traditional and cultural norms have the ability to greatly hinder women from reaching
their highest potential, but that that does not mean that culture is not necessary. She further suggests that it is unfair to say that culture is bad because it is the part of a nation's heritage. It is true that many cultural or traditional norms are beneficial to men, to the detriment of women, and those abusive practices need to be changed. Men’s whining and mumbling in meetings suggest to her that they are complying with the law, and do not see it as a correct thing that women are equal to them and that they should be allowed to speak for themselves in community meetings.

It is crucial for the survival of project to be inclusive of women especially in leadership positions, because they have demonstrated their will to volunteer for the benefit of the whole and their foresight. Sometimes men are being controlled by their wives who are not part of the meetings, as men of the village usually marry young wives who often ask them about meetings and show them how stupid they are when they hear what their contributions had been. This causes men to be quiet in meetings and women now often dominate the discussions, especially when it comes to brainstorming and suggestions. Zoleka further say that thinks that women's quick thinking and creative minds put them ahead of men as it was the case in the Garden of Eden of the Old Testament in the Bible where Eve showed her power of influence over Adam

By cultural and traditional norms, men are regarded as heads of families and the household, and this usually makes it difficult for women to work in leadership positions on the water projects. Because they are used to giving orders to their wives and not to take any, they expect the same treatment within the water projects. An example given by Zoleka is of their village Technical Operator (who is a man) who sometimes finds it difficult to take orders from his leadership (who are women) and who, even if he had to do something urgently, would do so in his own time. In the village it has become clear that men want to lead the projects through aggression, but because of the gender equality ground rules set by Mvula Trust, women are being treated fairly and given a platform to speak.
Some of the men who are involved in the water projects showed some disapproval of gender equality especially with women occupying leadership roles in the projects and they would normally signal their disapproval through their grumbling. However, in the same breath Zoleka says that she prefers working with men because on a one-on-one basis some men are easy to work with and humble, (but she does admit that some men are stubborn).

On how the harmful cultural values can be transformed, Zoleka suggested that the first step would be to expose people to information, so that the youth can select what they are interested in. This program would have to be done on a wide scale, also including exposure to sports, drama, arts and careers. She feels that even the project leaders need more training because the project is growing and so are the responsibilities. They hope that more training will expose them to more knowledge. When women are trained it gives them an advantage in villages where they are not allowed to speak in meetings, as the training provided them with the information that the villagers need to hear and so they are given the platform.

5.4 Mabatha’s story

Family and early years: Mabatha is the second born of 4 siblings to parents Nofesti and Bungane Qabaka of Sandile Village, Engcobo District. She had an older brother, and two younger sisters. Both her parents were illiterate people who lived on subsistence farming of livestock and crops. Mabatha’s father passed on when she was 12 years old and so she grew up with her mother.

As far as could remember life at home was not filled with happiness. This was because her mother was a widow and after the death of Mabatha’s father, her uncles (the younger brothers of Mabatha father) persecuted her family in the hope that her mother will flee back to her home village.
Traditionally, a widow can stay at her homestead and inherit her husband's asserts only when there is a son who cannot yet inherit what his father left as he is too young. A time came when her older brother left for Johannesburg to work in the mines and the women were left alone at home. Strange men used to come to frighten them at night and Mabatha’s uncles began stealing the livestock. Mabatha claims that their intention was to drive her mother into going back to her parent’s home because her uncles had no livestock of their own. Once the men arrived in the middle on the night and torched the house after stealing the livestock. Thankfully, one of the attackers came to warn them a day before so they could take refuge at the neighborhood and so they did. About 15 sheep were lost that evening.

Her mother reported the matter to the police, but the docket got lost. This was after her mother had been asked by the police during the investigation, whom she suspected and she named her bother-in-law as the suspect. Her uncle (father’s brother) was in turn accusing her mother of practicing witchcraft. Her mother also took the matter to the headman’s court (imbizo), but because she was not a man, the matter was not taken seriously.

There was no person to protect them from the attackers. Some members of the community even knew about the attacks but would do no more than offer them refuge for the night. This situation affected the women psychologically and they used to be nervous when evening came because they did not know if they were going to be attacked that day night or not.

After a telegram was sent to Johannesburg to her brother telling him of what happened, he came back home to help his family rebuild the homestead. Her brother’s view of the situation is that his uncles wanted him dead so that there would be no reason for his family to remain in the village. He therefore felt that he was safer in Johannesburg than at home.
Mabatha and her sisters had to learn work at an early age as none of her extended family, especially her uncles, were prepared to help them. She learnt how to use cattle to plough and plant fields, and how to milk the cows every morning. What motivated the girls was seeing the effort their mother and their brother put into ensuring the survival of the family.

Her mother had a good relationship with the community members and so she used to ask those with oxen to help her in her fields, and in return, she prepared sorghum beer for them. When a community comes together like this to help, especially concerning a task that requires many hands, it is called “ilima”.

School was an important part of Mabatha’s life although they had to take turns going there because someone had to tend the livestock. She was very active in athletics and netball and she won medals for the school in championships. The school was not far from where the principal’s home was and the girls used to go to the kraal there to ask for cow dung to plaster the floor. Sometimes the principal would ask Mabatha to go and make tea for him at his homestead. The father of the principal used to tell Mabatha that she was going to his daughter in law and that this was just a test to see whether she can do house chores well.

**Marriage:** In 1972, after her end of her Grade 9 (Standard 7) exams, Mabatha was taken to her new home against her will. Days before she was snatched to get married, she saw her husband-to-be, who was coming from the mines of Johannesburg, at school when they were preparing for a choir competition. She did not want to be married to him (Thanda) as she had promised someone else that she would get married to him. And so, when the girl who was supposed to guard her was not around for a while, Mabatha escaped and ran back home.

On her arrival at home, the reception from her mother was not welcoming and her mother told her that it is a disgrace for a woman who has been taken against her will to get married, to run back home. Mabatha felt betrayed by her own mother as she had
thought she was going to be on her side. Later Mabatha thought to herself that there is nothing for her to do but to respect her mother’s wishes. Her husband’s elder brother came to ask for her, and Mabatha’s mother apologized and explained that she had scolded her about running away and that Mabatha would go back on her own the same evening.

In those days abducting someone for marriage was not a criminal offence and no one ever thought of going to the police for that. Post-1994 South Africa has brought changes accompanied by rights which resulted in criminalizing the abduction and kidnapping aspects of arranged marriages. Furthermore, these days children resist being sent to someone they did not plan to marry, and some of them even commit suicide as an act of defiance.

A lobola of 10 cattle was sent to her mother after her husband came back from Johannesburg. In the early months of her marriage Mabatha experienced beating from her husband. He was very abusive, but after a time, she was the one who was asking him to beat her. She says that it was how he showed his love for her and that if it had happened that she died during a beating, she would have been pleased to have died honourably in marriage.

In her marriage Mabatha was blessed with seven children (three boys and four girls). Her husband worked in Johannesburg and came back home from time to time. Then he stopped coming home and he also stopped sending the money he used to send monthly. The whole family then had to rely on Mabatha’s mother-in-law’s pension grant. After a few months had passed, Mabatha decided to visit her husband and to find out what the reason was for his not supporting his children. In Johannesburg, where she stayed with him during the visit, he was not straight with her as he sometimes “forgot” to leave her money to buy food for the day. She therefore decided to do piece jobs during the day to sustain her and to send some money back to her children at home. At the same time she got herself a stand and she built herself a shack.
In 1985, realizing how her children must be struggling back in the village, she went to fetch them all to come and live with her in Johannesburg. She then asked her husband to allow her to look for a job and after being permitted, she got a job at a crèche. Mabatha’s husband was no longer supporting his children. Rather, she was supporting him out of her money that was not even enough to meet the needs of her own family. She provided for her children and sent them to school on her own.

Her husband then told her that he had been retrenched from work and that he was going to look for work in Cape Town. Within a day of telling her this, he left his entire family in Johannesburg. Mabatha used to call her husband in Cape Town, and on hearing her voice, he would hang up. This situation went on for a while and therefore Mabatha decided to go and look for him. Subsequent to having a dream about her husband cohabiting with a woman in Cape Town, she had a more urgent reason for going there.

Not knowing where she was going, she took a train and on her arrival headed for the police station. This is where she met a young man from her village who gave her directions to where a cousin of her stayed. Mabatha’s cousin went to look for her husband and after a long struggle, she found him. Mabatha’s husband asked her what she was doing there and why she was following him. After discussing the state of their marriage they began to fight, but he did not beat her this time.

Despite the psychological trauma her marriage has caused her, she remains loyal and loving to her marriage. Although things did not work out the way she thought they would, she was told by her mother that her focus in her marriage must not be on her husband, but on her household and family. Mabatha was also told that the suffering was part of the institution of marriage and that she had to respect her parent’s vows in arranging the marriage.

Her husband remained in Cape Town, and she left Johannesburg for the village to start her new life.
Involvement in the water projects: Before coming back to the village, she had been an active member of the water projects in the informal settlement where she had been staying. On arriving back at the village, she became involved in the water projects there and was elected to the committee that managed the projects. Mabatha also became involved in the community’s political structures and that is where she was exposed to government programs. Her participation in community structures enlightened her and gave her the confidence to stand up for what she believed was correct.

The water project was started in 1997 by a company called Magqadaza when Mabatha was still in Johannesburg. The project was introduced to the village by the ward councilor who called a meeting at the headman’s homestead. In the meeting people were told that government was bringing water to the people and that taps would be installed so that people would not have to walk further than 200 m to a tap. There was resistance from the community members, especially from the men who claimed that if the taps were placed close to their houses it will cause the walls of their houses to collapse. Mabatha said this concern was based on ignorance. The women, on the other hand, complained that placing the taps far away from the houses would be an inconvenience.

As these issues were discussed at the headman’s place the women had no platform to address the men, and the female voice was not taken seriously regarding the placement of the taps as close to their houses as possible. Some community members then bribed the contractor to do yard connections so that they could have water in their yards.

The contractor left the area without finishing the project. As a result, some taps were not functional and some pipes were sticking out of the ground. For years, people accepted the situation, not know what to do about it. In 2003 a meeting was called by the ward councilor. This time he was accompanied by officials from Mvula Trust (and NGO that conducts water and sanitation projects). At that meeting it was decided that a
committee of Community Services Providers (CSPs) and a Village Working Committee (VWC) be formed. Mvula Trust was clear that their objective was to finish what the contractor had started and not to do anything more.

The CSPs went for a week’s training in management, bookkeeping, business planning, water resource management etc at Engcobo Town Hall. Although the CSPs were volunteers, they received a stipend for the week they spent in training. After the training, the CSPs called a meeting to report to the community. At this meeting people to be trained as Technical Operators (TOs) were elected. These people were sent to be trained in the technical aspects of the water system by Mvula Trust officials in Engcobo Town Hall.

Looking back on how various influences in her life impact on her involvement in the water projects: Mabatha was raised by her mother in a disciplined and strict environment. A hiding was one of the means used to discipline children those days, although today that would be called abuse. Even though Mabatha’s mother was illiterate she managed to run a homestead and sometimes she did her father’s jobs (such as looking after the livestock and she used to closely observe the livestock and had knowledge of the symptoms of disease and of which traditional medicines to use to cure the diseases).

Schooling: Mabatha was very bright at school and she wanted to be a teacher as she noticed that qualifying to be a teacher did not take long as long as for other careers. She wanted to have her own car and a lot of money so she could help her home. At school she was very active in athletics and use to win trophies for the school in competition. However, those dreams came to nothing as got married through an arranged marriage. From there on, her future was determined by marriage.

Mabatha’s married life was not good as her husband stopped supporting her and the children, and therefore she struggled financially. However, the lack of support she received to raise her seven children did not make her fall apart. In stead, she became
strong, and she often uses her stories to encourage people who need encouragement in the development projects. How Mabatha handles the people she works with in these projects is based on the value system her mother instilled in her. This value system teaches us to respect people as they are, and to be humble and hardworking. In her childhood, not even members of the extended family helped her family, but nevertheless, at those times, her mother used to tell them to be strong, work hard and strive for independence. Her mother’s words were that they should never fold their arms and cry all the time without making an effort. Her life also taught her to be patient with people, especially those who need lots of explanation on issues. Fortunately, she is being appreciated by the community for her qualities as they often elect her to serve community structures.

According to cultural tradition, women are not supposed to address men, especially in the imbizos where the village’s most important decisions are taken. The reason for this emanates from the practice of lobola. A married woman came to the village by marriage and is thus a visitor because her home is elsewhere. Married women are thus treated as strangers in these villages and their role as such is to run their households and leave the community issues to men, even regarding issues that affect them, such as water.

Within the water projects those views of segregation have been dashed, as by law it is now illegal for any kind of discrimination. Gender representation is furthermore ensured as it is viewed as a way of facilitating development in all its dimensions - enhancing social, financial and human capital.

In meetings Mabatha uses both her inborn instincts and the knowledge she gained from her involvement in projects to deal with men whom she thinks are challenging her on the grounds that she is a woman. Because of her background (being raised under cultural and traditional norms that are taken as created by God) she always asks humbly for meetings (which are composed of men) to take note of her views and she says because she asks humbly they usually give her the platform. Even when she is
denied an opportunity to talk several times, she becomes persistent until she is heard. Men often complain about women trying to take over their places as the heads, rather than dealing with the issues at hand, namely that of finding workable and innovative solutions to drive the development projects.

Mabatha noticed that the men’s thinking is sluggish and that they have short tempers. The focus of the men is on power relationships, and they are therefore not in a problem-solving, analytical frame of mind. In the meetings, she usually introduces her views in a gradual and humble manner and she makes sure that she sticks to the facts.

There is a saying: “impandla ingena ngentlontlo”, which means that “getting bald is a gradual process”. This is usually said about women and means that by giving them more room to speak, they will soon be showing men the way. These fears that men have about their role being taken over by women, also gives them a reason to think carefully before they speak and to stick to facts. When men act in this careful manner, it is one of the signs that they are resistant to change, and that they only comply with the law about gender representation because there is nothing they can do about it.

When a woman enters the institution of marriage, the older women come together to explain to her how it is to be a married woman and how to treat your husband. This is another or stage of life. Marriage means that you become different from single women in how you handle yourself. The elders highlight some principles that are similar to how to one should conduct yourself in a workshop or a development project. You have to be respectful, humble and patient – even to people younger than you yourself, not only to elders.

As a young married woman, Mabatha used to ask her in-laws for permission to take part in the projects, as initially development projects were mostly composed of men. This she would do after planning her daily chores carefully to make sure that she had finished her work for that day so she could have time for participation in the projects. The participation of women in water projects is vital, although men often see their
participation as a waste of time, but at the same time want clean drinking water. This mentality is often caused by ignorance. Few men in the village are working in cities and the majority is unemployed and except for those men who have livestock, men often abuse alcohol in the taverns.

5.5 Sara’s story

Family and early years: Although she was born in 1963 in Soweto, Johannesburg, Sara currently lives in the Engcobo District. She is the seventh of the nine children (five male and four female) her parents had. Of these children, five passed on before she was born, and her older sister passed on in 1991.

After her parents got married in the late 1940s her father left the village to get work in Johannesburg and usually came back during December holidays to be with his family. Sara’s parents’ attempts to expand the family failed as five of their children died as babies from an unexplained sickness. Subsequent to this her parents agreed that the family had to move to Johannesburg to attempt to have children. In traditional culture, having children is one of the most important aspects in cementing a marriage. This is because marriage is seen as an exercise of expanding the family. Boys are being seen as the legacy of the family, and they also help with the physical work in the homestead and they help in the village on behalf of the homestead. However, girls are also seen as an asset, because after agreements between parents on an arranged marriage, parents would receive cattle for lobola for their marriage. Sara’s duties when she was a girl were to fetch water from the river, collect fire wood, fetch cow dung and to smear the floor.

On her mother’s arrival in Johannesburg she was told by her husband that all she was there for was to have children and not to work as he didn’t want to be seen as someone who failed to provide for his family. Despite the fact that Sara’s mother was fit and keen to work to help her husband as her family was growing, she was not allowed to do so by
him. She started to do piece jobs and laundry without her husband’s knowledge during the daytime when he was at work.

During the early 1960s people were given houses in Orlando, Soweto and Sara’s parents was given a four-roomed house where Sara spent the early years of her life before coming back with her mother to the village. Some members of the extended family (from the father’s side) suggested that the house in Johannesburg should be sold. However, Sara’s mother refused and to this day, her elder sister is living in the house.

Sara’s mother spent 21 years in Johannesburg before coming back to the village in 1976 after her husband passed on. She had to return to the village to look after her mother who was sick (bedridden), as well as a child of her sister’s who had passed away in 1991. This child who grew up as her own son and is the same age as Sara’s daughter who is now in Johannesburg, is now working for a motor manufacturing plant in Durban. She admits to not being the only person to contribute to his upbringing, as he wasn’t keen to go to school and he was therefore sent to school in Johannesburg her eldest sister’s care in Johannesburg.

**Lifestyles:** Sara remembers nothing about her early life in Johannesburg or her father as she was very young then. On her family’s return to the village, their life had to change as they had no father and the extended family was not there to help them get to their feet. It was tough as her mother had to go around the village to do piece jobs (laundry) to sustain them. The family further survived on farming crops, and on selling some of the crops. However, the family had no livestock, and especially no cattle to help plough the fields and to provide milk. Sara and siblings had to do jobs such as weeding fields or helping with the harvest for those who had cattle, in return for which the cattle owner would plough and plant their fields. People those days had ubuntu and were very honest so that they would do this skills exchange in good faith.
The lifestyle in the village was based on patriarchal values that stated that men were the head of the households and women were the tail. When she was growing up Sara’s mother inculcated in her children the values of sharing, discipline, respecting each other, love for education and being exemplary to the village. As children they used to eat their food from in the same dish, and those who arrived first would leave food in the bowl for the others to have when they come from school. This was one of the lessons that still bind them in their adult life and because only some of them are working, it does not mean that those who are not employed are voiceless in family affairs.

Sara’s mother was a very strict person who would stamp her foot on something she didn’t approve of and wouldn’t budge. Although she was firm, she was also fair, and she had a good sense of humour and she used to tell jokes. She had lived in both worlds (rural and urban) and some members of her extended family were often not helpful to her as they said that she has a “modern mindset”. This is because Sara’s mother believed in educating her children irrespective of gender was imperative, and that was contrary to the norm in the village. As other parents in the village and part of Sara’s extended family were arranging marriages for their children who were the same age as Sara and her sisters. Sending girls to school was seen as a waste of money as they would eventually get married and work for the husband’s household without any refunds. Thus for the other parents in the village sending girls to school was a waste of money.

After her family came back to the village subsequent to her father’s passing, the reception from the extend family was not welcoming. As her brother, the only male child in her immediate family, was under age, he could not attend “imbizos” because of his not being a man yet. This situation caused that Sara’s family was isolated in the village and they missed events, as nobody would come to tell them about news and decisions – not even the youngest brother of her father. This situation made them vulnerable to stigmatization as people who do not attend other people’s customs or events in the village.
Nevertheless, her mother taught her the values of humanity, ubuntu, respect for elders, striving for independence, and that they could rely on each other. Sometimes sorrow strengthens bonds between relatives or family members, as when Sara’s second eldest sister passed on in a car accident, leaving a baby boy whom Sara had to come and help raise. Sara left Johannesburg to be with her niece who was the same age as her elder daughter so both grew as brother and sister. Except that when Zizi grew up he didn’t want school, until the family decided to send him to a technical school in Johannesburg to his aunt. He passed and is now working in a Motor Manufacturing Plant in Durban.

After Zizi left for work, Maria took care of her elderly mother who passed on in September 2006 at the age of 83. At first the family employed a number of people to look after Sara’s elderly mother as Sara had become involved in the development project. However, the family then decided to use the money to help her unemployed brother to pay lobola. The reasoning was that the same money they paid to people to look after their mother, they could use to get a wife for her brother to look after the mother.

**Schooling:** Sara started school at Rala Junior Secondary where she completed her Standard 6, before going to All Saints High School, a boarding school in Manzana Village. She fell pregnant with her oldest daughter while she was in Standard 7, but she returned to school a year later and stayed in school until she wrote her matriculation exams. It was her mother’s wish that the children should be educated. However, this was seen as a waste of money by some people in the village, especially when Sara’s mother asked for loans to pay the school fees. People would advise her to arrange for her kids to get married so that she can make cattle out of them. Sara’s mother sent two of her children to her home family village where they attended school at Clackebury College. This is where Sara’s eldest sister qualified as a teacher.

Over weekends, Sara used to come back from school to an unwelcoming reception from the other village children her age. She was regarded as being an outsider,
evidenced by the fact that she used to wear pants and was ahead in school of children of her age group in the village. The children would make statements to the effect that she thought she was better than them. She continued in school and wrote her matriculation exams, which she sadly failed. She never tried to pass her matriculation again, but did some empowerment courses in Bookkeeping, Sewing and Management when she was in Johannesburg.

**Relationship with parents:** Sara’s mother was a very strict, firm, but fair person who had patience with her children, especially when they did not understand. She did believe in spanking someone after several warnings. Girls were told to be at home before sunset, close curtains and put on the lights. Even though the family did not have livestock, Maria’s mother used to send her children to go and help in houses where there was livestock so that they could learn to do the work.

Although she did not know her father, Sara said that hearing from her sisters, her father was a very good, gentle and a kind man. Unlike other men who would leave the rural areas to go to the cities and then would start new families there, Sara’s father called his wife from the rural areas to join him in the city so that they could expand their family. Sara’s sister told her that their parents never quarreled in front of the children and their father never beat her mother up, although he did drink alcohol.

**Marriage:** At the age of 16 years, Sara was involved with someone whose family was regarded as from a higher class to her family, as she was from a household without a father. According to traditional culture, when a man has made a woman pregnant, the woman’s family would go and report the incident to the man’s family. What is then expected is for the man to acknowledge his that he knows of the fact in front of both family delegations. If the boyfriend acknowledges having made the woman pregnant, then his family would have to pay a cow for damages. Sara says her boyfriend succumbed to pressure from his family and said he had no knowledge of the incident. That was heartbreaking to Sara as it meant that her child had no father because the father had disowned her.
Thereafter the boyfriend left the village to study and later to work. He came back to the village 10 years later and they revived their relationship. This time the boyfriend was in bad shape as he was abusing in alcohol. This time, the boyfriend’s mother was ululating, praising her as his bride-to-be. Weeks later, the boyfriend’s family sent people to pay lobola, but Sara’s family regarded the cattle as the payment for the pregnancy incident. That caused strained relations. Sara at that time was also pregnant with her second child by the same man. Up to this day, she has not taken the children’s father to court for maintenance, because of how she was brought up to fend for herself and strive for independence. Sometimes when things are bad, she goes and asks her former boyfriend to help her out, but she insists on self reliance.

**Project involvement:** In 1999, ICATO, a contractor (Civil Engineering Company) came to conduct ground water surveys near the local river without anybody’s knowledge of their presence. After spending days in the area, drilling started and an engine for drawing ground water was installed. The contractor was linked to the ward councilor who called a community meeting. People from the community who were interested in working on the project to dig trenches were asked to put their names forward because the government’s object was to use local people in development projects.

No community structure was elected to oversee the processes and to ensure community participation. Some taps had water coming out of them and some had not, and there was nothing the community could do because the contractor vanished without finishing the work. In 2000 the ward councilor again called a community meeting and this time he was accompanied by officials from Mvula Trust. The Mvula Trust Officials were there to introduce themselves to the community and to explain their objective of bringing clean water to the village. Although, Mvula Trust ensured the community that they would bring clean water, they also made it clear that at that stage of the project, their resources would only allow them to fix what was not working, and that they would not have money to extend the water project. Koleka Makhalima from Mvula Trust was
the assigned the role of development officer for the Upper Qolweni Water Project and her role was to manage the project with the villagers.

Koleka’s first mission was for the community to form project management structures namely, the Community Services Providers (CSPs) and Village Working Committee (VWC). Elections were held for positions on the two community structures and Sara was elected as part of the CSPs in her absence as she was volunteering her help with the local government elections.

After the CSP /VWC elections Koleka organized for the CSPs to undergo training at the Engcobo Town Hall on the following issues: water resource management; project management; bookkeeping; organizational management and communication. The CSPs were also taught how to formulate a constitution for their structure and how to regulate water use. A meeting was held with the community where decisions were taken on how the implementation of regulations is to be monitored and by who. This was a consultative process and everybody had an opportunity to voice his or her view. Because Mvula Trusts’ officials made it clear that all decisions must be representative of all the stakeholders, a new chapter in history of the village was, for the first time, women had their voice heard.

**How her life influenced her views on men, culture and the development projects:**
At the time that she was about to get married, she really wanted to set right the wrongs of the past as she did not want to hold a grudge against her former boyfriend, and it was sad that it did not work out that way. She admits that traditional culture norms are repressive to women but says that the extent, to which this is true, does depend on the people involved and the context.

Being involved in the development projects came naturally to her as she loved to see her community developing from within. After working for a short stint at a furniture shop in town that later closed and left her unemployed, she volunteered to work on the development projects. With the help of money from her sisters and the child support
grant she was able to sustain her family. Because of her qualities of respect, situation analysis, discipline, and good communication skills, she was able to secure part-time jobs in the national census, as well as in the national and local government elections. She also was elected as the deputy secretary of the Engcobo farmers union. This she thinks is proof of her leadership qualities.

In her involvement in water projects she saw that men acted as if they feared female domination. It was difficult for a woman to get her story across, as men would always seek to corner women with questions. They would however not succeed as women’s minds are quick. When men started to be aggressive and loud (speaking out of emotions), she had to act wisely. The philosophy underlying development states that: “Batho Pele”, People First. By adopting this philosophy in all spheres, women are able to even deal with the discriminative attitudes of men by being polite and only speaking of facts. The fact that they were being ensured by a leading NGO that the ground rules of the project are of gender equality and representation, also gave the women strength.

The acquisition of skills has helped women in the project as it boosted their confidence. They had to stand up and address the community on various issues and the more they speak, the more they gain momentum. As the women gained more knowledge and were capacitated by training, the bondage of traditional culture became irrelevant. Furthermore, the fact that she is not married does not put her in a disadvantaged position relative to men, as she is able to address men as an individual. Sara says that with these changes, although many men to not welcome them, households will no longer need men to represent them in discussions around community development.

5.6 Nozolile’s story

Family and early years: Nozolile was born in 1957 in Engcobo’s Tshaphile Village. Her parents had 12 children, ten of whom passed on, survived by Nozolile and her younger brother.
She had an average childhood. Her mother was very strict and beat them up if they didn't follow her instructions. Her mother was, however, empowering and she used to tell them that she wants them to be independent and not useless. The harshness of her mother brought Nozolile and her younger brother very close. Her brother recognized that she is his elder sister, and although she got married and left her home to him, she continues to advise him. According to traditional culture, a married woman has no right to come from her new home to have a say in the affairs of her family home where her brother had been left, but her brother listens to her advice.

In those days, Nozolile says it was better than today when people live a so-called civilized lifestyle. Those days they used to plant three fields. As the boys within her immediate and extended family were young during the time when she was growing up, the girls used to do “boys' work”. Girls used to plant with cattle on yokes, as well as with planters if the fields were large, and they also used cattle on yokes to remove weeds. Other jobs included milking sheep, cattle and goats, shearing sheep, herding livestock, slaughtering sheep, and harvesting maize and wheat with cattle on yokes.

**Parent's role:** Both parents were illiterate and very strict, and especially her mother was sometimes very harsh on Nozolile and her younger brother. As her mother was with the children most of the time, she was running the household and teaching the children how to work. At her home there were no chores for “boy or girls” and the work was distributed equally. When she reached puberty, she was taught by her mother about the stage of being a young woman, what was expected of her and how she should handle herself.

Nozolile emphasized that although her mother was strict, she did everything in her power to empower the family as her father was a migrant building worker in Cape Town. Her father was away from home for the whole year, but he would return in December and would stay at home for two months before leaving again for Cape Town early the following year. The father’s presence at home often relieved them from the harsh
treatment of her mother, as he would sometimes intervene on their behalf and they enjoyed his company as he was a soft-spoken person.

Her father did not play an active role in her life. However, he played the very important role of sending money from Cape Town for her to have school uniforms and shoes. Those days children had no shoes and the wearing of shoes became common a year before she got married. The girls used to wear the same dresses at home and at school. When a uniform was introduced at school, material would be bought and a sewer would be asked to make uniforms for all the girls.

Her father thought her how to use the plough and the planter, a job which was considered to be boy’s work. The only time she bonded with her father was during the two months’ vacation which he spent with them every year. It was during this time that he transferred his skills to them.

Although today, when she looks back, she is happy with her mother’s methods of bringing up children as they made her the person she is, at that time, she preferred her father as he was more subtle in his approach and patient with her.

**Community:** Those days men were regarded as the head of the household and the women the tail. Every week meetings (imbizo) were held at the headman’s homestead and only men would be allowed to attend. It was the work of the women and the girls to do household chores like cooking, and plastering the house with cow dung, weeding the garden or fields, as well as fetching wood and water. Men used to plough and plant fields, as well as transport heavy goods with the use of sledges pulled by oxen.

People were expected to respect the elders in the community and every parent in the village was your parent. Even if you were driving sheep to drink and someone who was old asked you to fetch something from his or her house, you would go to where you
were sent, leaving the sheep unattended, only collecting them after you have done the errand.

There was also the culture of “Ubuntu” where everybody knew that nobody was an island and working together brings better results. The community had a practice of transferring knowledge, which is called “ilima” where people in the village put their hands together, roll up their sleeves and help each other. This is one of the institutions which strengthened the social networks in the community. The village would be invited by an owner of a field to come with their hoes and help with removing the weeds. The plot owner would then prepare refreshments (home-brewed beer and food) for the workers. During lunch was when knowledge was transferred as people would talk about the old days and about how things are done.

The National Government, through its Provincial and District offices, has started a Poverty Eradication Project in the field of agriculture where they provide tractors, fertilizers and seeds to farmers. The officers who monitor progress on this project have created a sense of individualism, and have thus broken the social cohesion within the community. People in the community no longer work together in the fields and the only forums where they meet are at funerals and initiations, where there is no time for transferring any information.

**Schooling:** Nozolile started her schooling at the Tshaphile Lower Primary School and went to do her grade 4 (standard 2) at Sithoza Primary School where her aunt was teaching. She had to stay with her aunt during school days as this school was far from home and she would come back home on school holidays. According to her, her aunt was a spoiler and she thinks that that was because she never had children of her own. She quoted instances where she thinks her aunt found it difficult to say no to her. During the vacation at home, Nozolile would be selective in doing house chores and there were chores she was not prepared to do. After her parents noticed this they thought that if she stayed with her aunt for much longer she was going to be spoilt and that that would
undo their teachings, so they arranged for her to get married. That was the end of schooling for her.

Teachers in those days believed too much in using the switch to reinforce information and thus children would be subjected to slapping if they give wrong answers or cannot remember when asked questions. Nonetheless, most of her school teachers liked her as she was very active in athletics, netball, and was in the school choir. During her school holidays when Nozolile was at home visiting, she was selective on chores she wanted to do and not. Something her parents noticed and were skeptical of her staying with her Aunt as to them she was spoiling her. It was at that time that arrangements were made for her to be married driven by the thought that going back to stay with her aunt is not serving their purpose of preparing her for marriage so they can get cattle from her lobola. Her dreams of being a nurse were now destroyed as her parents only interest was getting cattle from her lobola. After that it became evident to her that they were only sending her to school because other people were sending their children. Even after she got married she asked her husband to take her to school and he refused asking who was going to look after the homestead when he was working in the city.

**Marriage:** She was sent to get married at a time when she was not even thinking of it as she was not into boys at that time. The monotony of household chores and the enormity of responsibilities played a big part in the lack of socialization because the choices were either you comply or are punished. On the contrary, her children with their constitutionally enshrined rights, challenge her command as they threaten to take her to the law if she punishes them through a hiding. For example her daughters have ample time as after doing their chores they can have time to socialize and visit friends.

In 1976, at the age of 19, through an arrangement by her parents, she got married to a man she did not know. Because she respected her parent’s wishes she didn’t run away or went home, but obeyed and stayed at her new home. Although there was initial discomfort because of the difference in family traditions and ways of doing things, things
slowly got better as she got used to this new environment. When she got married the immediate family consisted of the mother-in-law and her son.

Mr. Mlindelo (senior) the father to Nozolile’s husband got married early in his life and had a son when his wife passed away. His family went on to arrange another wife for him, the woman who took care of his young son who later in his life got married to Nozolile. Nozolile’s husband referred to his step-mother as his mother as she was the only mother he knew in his life and they had no more children in her family.

There were so many rules and regulations that she had to uphold. She says that some of these were empowering but that some were destructive to women.

Being married to such a small family, compared to hers, was unusual to her. Moreover, her mother-in-law was a very quiet person and she lacked creativity as the kraal was empty, and the family’s fields were not planted. Because of what she was used to back home, namely that of ploughing, planting the fields and herding livestock, this situation frustrated her, and she wanted to go back home but decided to stay.

There were great similarities in the social structure at her new home in terms of the fact that men were recognized as above women. The communities, especially the women, were delighted that her mother-in-law eventually had a new daughter to look after her while her son who was working in Johannesburg as she was getting old. However, there were long faces between the smiles as some were not happy when Nozolile collected the livestock that some people had stolen from her mother-in-law.

When she arrived at her new home, the kraal was empty because all the live stock was used to pay her lobola. She was very depressed as she was used to herding livestock at home where she came from. She also did not understand why her mother-in-law would go to the neighbours to ask for maize while she could have planted it herself. It then became clear that the family had no fields around there because they were descendants of a woman who returned home after her husband died, and so according
to tradition, she had no claim on land. They had to wait for fields to be sold, but after buying them they realized that these fields were very far. With the assistance of her husband, Nozolile managed to fill the kraal with sheep, goats and cattle, some of which were stolen.

Nozolile and her husband were blessed with seven children, one of whom passed on at the age of three. Their first child was born in 1977 when her husband was working in Johannesburg in a factory. Their second child was born in 1980 during the time that her husband was working as a bus driver for the Johannesburg Municipality's Department of Transport (which later became the PUTCO private bus company). After the death of her son in 1985 she could not have kids until the 1990s where she had three more in 1992, 1994 and her last born in 1997. She used to go for long visits to her husband in Johannesburg because the children were old and she wanted more kids.

It was during this time that she was exposed to women’s micro-finance society schemes (Stokvels). She was involved with the help of her husband as she was not working. Her husband was retrenched during the township unrests of the late 1980s and he came home. After their third child was born in 1990, her husband became ill and went to Cape Town to his uncle who took him to see the doctors. After being retrenched, her husband bought a van that he later sold due to mechanical problems, and him having health problems. After his return from Cape Town, now well from the sickness, he went around looking for work to help his wife raise their children.

With the help of Nozolile, her husband got a job at a security firm in Engcobo Town. Later the security company moved to East London and as he refused to move with the company, he was unemployed yet again.

**Her involvement in the water project:** The Upper Qolweni water project started in 2000 through the arrival of the Ward Councilor with Development Officers from Mvula Trust. These Development Officers asked for a community meeting in order to brief the stakeholders about the plans to continue the projects of delivering water to the area.
The delivery of water started in the area in 1994 when a contractor came to drill for access to ground water. They asked the community to form a committee and later asked for people who were interested in working on the project, (e.g. opening trenches) to submit their names. People started working and pipes were put right across the village and some people refused to let the pipes go over their relative’s graves causing some taps to be situated far from the people. A generator was also installed, and there were taps in some areas that had no water. Without saying anything, the contractor disappeared. Not even the ward councilor knew of their coming and their presence until told by the community.

Six years later, Mvula Trust appeared to help revive the project, but not to start anything new. The involvement of the women in the water project was through the election of development management structures namely the Village Working Committee (VWC) and the Community Service Providers (CSPs). Contrary to traditional norm, some of the rules were that the structures should be gender sensitive and therefore three women were elected onto the seven-member CSP structure. In her absence, Nozolile was elected as Chairperson of the Water Project. When the elections were held Nozolile was next to her daughter bedside in hospital as she was expecting her first grandchild. Besides, the disillusionment and loss of faith in the outside development organization’s intentions were starting to show in the village. As people would put going to community at the end of their priority list. Despite that though, Nozolile’s community made sure of her appointment on the structure, because she is trustworthy, reliable and selfless regarding issues of development in her area.

All seven of the members of the committee went for a week’s training at Engcobo Municipality Town Hall to obtain skills such as water management, personal hygiene, gender issues, bookkeeping, project and financial management, organizational structure and powers of office, and meeting procedures.
A week later, the technical operators were sent for training to fix leaking and broken pipes and taps, and to purify water. After everybody came back from the training, the committee formulated rules and regulations and these were referred to the community so that they could add what they thought was needed on how to manage water usage. People were again organized to undertake the manual labor to finish the piping and a reservoir was built into which water was piped by the generator. From the tank, the water would be distributed to all the taps that are connected to the system. This was not a smooth process as it complicated by the need to comply with legislation that state that communal taps should be at a maximum radius of 200 m from all houses using water from that tap. Some other challenges were people doing laundry at the communal tap, animals scratching themselves on the pole of the tap, and some community members asking for water to be connected to their yards.

Men are very interested in water projects but their biggest problems are impatience and looking for instant results. Most of the time men are driven by money and they do not understand that development will eventually have financial spin-offs. Even though other men also take part in development projects, the men in the water projects are still getting teased or being seen as weak and submissive to women. Men further curse what they call the “Mbeki Government of Women and Children”. Those men who take part in projects use the argument that it is their duty as parents to provide for their children to explain why they work on the projects.

Nozolile’s definition of development is the availability of basic services, namely clean water, sanitation facilities, crèches for young children, proper schools for their children’s education, as well as jobs. She further stated that development should seek to promote self-reliance, equality, a voice for the voiceless and dignity. She emphasized the importance of empowerment and the establishment of long-term projects that will enable the community to prosper on their own. Most women volunteer to participate in development projects because as they are mothers, their families’ and community’s welfare is vital to them, as is the foundation of a better life.
The projects need workers who are hands-on, disciplined and who have good time-management skills. These skills come easily to women, as they believe in steady growth from small to big and men are lazy.

In some projects of the projects, women are in the majority. Some men who have skills talk too much as they have low self esteem because they were laid-off from their jobs in the cities. They are also underestimating the efforts of the women in trying to improve the quality of life in the village. Examples of this attitude are those men who criticize people who dig the trenches, saying that they would rather go and drink than work for the fee offered – even if sometimes the money is not much less than offered in the city for the same job.

**How her life experiences influence her role in the project:** Nozolile’s strict upbringing made her the person who she is today, namely straightforward, respectful of other people, compassionate, having UBUNTU, striving for self-reliance, persevering, resilient, hands-on, respectful of traditional culture.

These attributes have come out in these projects, although initially, she did not know that she has the potential to lead and to make things happen for her village. Volunteering in various projects and participating in various structures in the area have enhanced her self esteem and confidence. Because of the values instilled by her parents, she has a strong backbone and she is an objective person who doesn’t take sides during disputes.

Her arranged marriage made her very angry initially as it was not in her plans to get married because she wanted to become a nurse. But she says that if someone wants to make her marriage work it is vital that she humbles herself and be submissive to the culture and tradition of her new home. Nozolile stated clearly that traditional culture is not a hindrance for women’s progress, because they are just a continuation of what parents instill in a girl when she grows up. On the other hand, she admits that men are
abusing these rules for their own benefit, but what helps women is to stick to the facts (as she literally states “the truth”).

On the meaning of Lobola to a woman, she said that it is one of the cornerstones of their tradition because it adds value to the institution of marriage. She insisted that no person is sold or bought, but that it is used to distinguish true marriage from cohabitation or same-sex marriages. These days money is often used as an exchange medium instead of cattle but rural people prefer cattle, sheep, goats and horses. Consequently, married women become the builders of society, not only to the benefit of their own homestead, but the whole village. Nowinton’s experience of the behaviour of women who got married without Lobola or with an unfinished Lobola in the form of cattle is that they are carefree and do not conform to the rules of marriage.

The training played a big role in empowering women because it indirectly posed a challenge to men’s stereotypes (that of women not being allowed to speak at community gatherings), because they had to listen to women as they had information about water and were in leadership positions. She also said that equality doesn’t mean reverse discrimination against men, but that men should be involved in these development projects.

Men usually are not pleased with women addressing them in these meeting, so one important skill to have is the ability to read the body language of people in the meeting and to tactically stick to the facts. Some men will come and commend you for speaking up but that happens on the side lines (not during the heat of the meeting). Men who do this openly might be made fun off at their gatherings and are often labeled as supporters of women’s 50/50 gender equity.

Social networking (ILIMA) is vital for society as a means of transferring indigenous knowledge and getting people of different age groups to mix. On such occasions, people of both sexes work together equally, so to Nozolile this one of the successful indigenous ways of pursuing equality. The aim of gender equality is not to discriminate against men but to give women a voice.
All citizens have to comply with the constitution and the men in the villages are no exception. They often grumble but are slowly getting to accept the changes and because of her qualities the technical operator, who is a man, easily submits to her orders as she is the Chairperson.

In the village there are traditional and cultural norms where women are expected to participate especially during initiation of both boy and girls. This is part of strengthening social networks as people in the village work together for the good of everybody. Women are asked for instance to bring their circles for cutting grass and building the houses for the initiates. During summer after heavy rains, all community members are invited to lend a hand in removing weeds from the field with their own hoe. In a process called “ilima” as where people would move from one household field to another. During this exercise the host has to prepare homebrew beer and food so that around lunchtime people can feast. This is the time where old members of the community would tell stories to the young about their lives and share indigenous knowledge. Nozolile identifies this as a tool for transfer of knowledge from old to young. This spirit of “ilima”, which is built on selflessness and striving for the benefit of all and such is essential for the survival of the water project. On the same she sees some community members whose participation is driven by self-centeredness.

In the development project traditional and cultural norms are made irrelevant by the ground rules set for these project, in terms of gender equality and later the training given to women who are then supposed to be listened to as they are the only people in the village with the information. As all official meeting are held at the headman’s homestead next to the kraal, the same venue used for the “imbizos”, women are now regarded as if they are part of the leadership.

Initially men used to discriminate against women in meetings and this sometimes still happen (but not often), those women’s points of view are disregarded or not taken seriously. Somehow this has caused Nozolile to have more confidence in speaking facts
because she noticed that some men are neither knowledgeable nor factual about issues related to development. Added to this was a strategy she developed because of being tired of being discriminated against and being aggressively cornered by men in these meetings by making issues unnecessarily personal. Her strategy was that of engagement and being able to read the atmosphere in the meeting and knowing when to unleash your ammunition (facts).

5.7 Chapter Summary

In the preceding chapter the data of the study in the form of narrated stories was presented. Details on life stages and events with which the women were subjected to, was highlighting in the stories.
6 DATA ANALYSIS: LINKING THEORY TO THE WOMEN’S STORIES

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter concepts applied in data analysis were discussed. This was followed by the analysis of results in the form of subtopics that are based and extraction of the literature review and the data stories.

6.2 Concepts applied in the data analysis

The stories of the women as told to the researcher have been analysed on the basis of themes that were identified as part of the literature survey. Based on the connections between these theoretical literature-based themes and the women’s experiences, recommendations in respect of managing water services projects may be made. However, these recommendations serve merely to open up understanding of the complexity around traditional culture and gender mainstreaming on the water services projects. As has been discussed earlier, only a “snapshot” of these women’s lives was obtained and therefore the results of the research cannot be generalized to the entire population or to all times.

In linking the theory to the women’s experiences, certain concepts that have been identified during the literature review were considered. These concepts are that of fracticality, attractors, bifurcations, feedback-loops, and asymmetry. These concepts will now be briefly explained below.

The first concept is that of fracticality. As has been discussed before, fracticality is defined as the self-similarity of a system. For example, the fracticality principle can be applied across the different spheres of the woman’s adult life. Examples of these fractals are the woman as an individual; the woman as part of a family; the woman as
part of the community; the woman as part of the water projects, etc as shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Illustration of the concept of fractals across the different sphere’s of the women’s adult lives

The concept of these fractals is linked to the woman as part of a social complex system, which is an open system that is characterized by a constant exchange of information between systems (individuals) at local level. Social forces in the form of networks and trust are essential for preventing the system from collapsing.

The individual interaction at local level produces emergent properties that characterize and determine the behavior of the whole system. Therefore, to achieve an understanding of the the institutional aspect of social complexity it is essential to engage with the behavioral, normative patterns and social rules. The cultural system comprises
subsystems of norms, values and behavioral patterns. Norms are rules and regulation that are used by a dominant group in a society to normalize those perceived as not like the dominant group. The domination is usually entrenched through religious or belief systems (Foucault, 2003:29).

This leads to a consideration of the concept of asymmetry. A complexity approach highlights the value of asymmetry in a system, for instance in the form the leader-follower relationship, or the parent-child relationship. The asymmetry acts as a catalyst for change. However, another aspect of a complexity approach, namely that of giving every voice a platform to be heard through valuing diversity, would lead to a rejection of domination within these relationships.

Asymmetry in social systems revolves around power relations, which according to Foucault (2000:29) is not a localized static possession but is something that functions when it is part of a chain. This means that individuals in a society all have some element of power as power flows through people.

One of the characteristics of the fractality principle says that if one of the fractals in system is disturbed, the reverberation goes across the other fractals. This can be illustrated by considering the impact of feedback loops in the system. For instance, this means that the impact of the exposure of rural women (who are subjected to traditional norms) to the project which has a gender equality ethos, will affect not only the women as a partner on the project, but also other fractals such as the woman as part of the family unit. Therefore, activities such as training which ensure that women are put in management positions, and the promotion of women and men working together, will put into operation a feedback loop that will have an impact on how these women deal with inequalities at societal, family and individual level.

Another concept that facilitated the linking of the literature with the research results is that of attractors. Human desires are subject to attractors thereby influencing the way people behave or respond to situations. The six attractors that influence the desires of
humans are as follows: three attractors influence human actions towards acquiring power, knowledge and freedom; and the other three attractors influence human action towards experiencing love, pleasure and long life (Dimitrov, 1998:2). To illustrate the concept of attractors: what was common in the women’s stories was that all of the women had dreamt of being educated (knowledge) and thus would have acquired educational status (a form of power) and the financial freedom that goes with education.

Another illustration of how attractors function comes from the story of Nozolile. The fact that she complied with her parent’s wishes in terms of her marriage partner, did not dampen her desire for advancement in life (she wanted to be a social worker). However, the change in context brought on by her marriage resulted in her changing how she gave effect to that desire. As discussed in the literature review, a young African married woman can acquire power or status in the form of motherhood. Later on, when she acquired material power, she continued to give effect to her desire for advancement (power and status) by buying livestock with the little money her husband used to send her. Her desire for knowledge and education is also illustrated by her life story. For instance, on one of her visits to Johannesburg, she met a lady who told her of nursing vacancies in an old age home. Although Nozolile was interested in this opportunity, as she wanted to be a social worker from childhood, she was told that she was not educated enough to be trained. Yet she did not give up on her desire for knowledge and education, and when the chance to be educated presented itself through the water projects, although it was in a different field, she took the chance.

The concept of bifurcation can be illustrated as follows. Three of the five women (Zoleka, Nozolile and Mabatha) got married through an arranged marriage institution. At this point, the lives of these women bifurcated towards a chaotic state as their lives at that point were clouded with a lot of uncertainty. The reaction of these women to a similar event was not uniform. Two of the women ran away as a way of rebelling against the arranged marriage as they were not in love with their husbands. The third woman was more submissive and stayed at the home of her new husband’s family.
To further illustrate the concept of feedback loops, it can be seen how subjecting the human system to new information in the form of a feedback loop might cause conflict in or with other systems (e.g. parents or parents-in-law). After Mabatha ran back home, her mother told her that what she did was a disgrace and that she must go back to her new home as those were her wishes for her. This act of the parent in this context was a feedback loop of which the role was to balance the system through a process of control or dampening.

6.3 Analysis and discussion of research results

6.3.1 Introduction to the analysis of research results

The aim of this research was to open a space of knowledge in relation to the impact of culture on gender mainstreaming in water and sanitation projects. In this section, that space of understanding is created by presenting the analysis of the research results in the following manner:

(1) Part of the literature is put forward as a statement;
(2) Components of the stories that link to the literature statement are extracted and discussed, and
(3) The impact of this information on water projects is discussed in terms of how practitioners might make use of this information to enhance the project.

In this section, the following themes are discussed in the manner described above:

(1) Women’s time and labour
(2) Women’s power within African societies
(3) The role of small causes in women’s lives (the Butterfly effect)
(4) The role of fundamental human desires in the women’s lives
(5) Utilising social capital on projects
6.3.2 Women’s time and labour

*From the literature*

In the literature review dealing with social capital in relation to women’s time and labour, it was stated that NGO programs are often based on the assumption that women, especially from rural areas, have an infinitely elastic labor time. This often exposes women to be the targets of voluntary civil society work. It also increases the unpaid work burden of women (Van Straveren, 2002:21 and Kritzinger, 2002:9).

Furthermore, Marxism that informs the Marxist feminism literature recognizes the existence of different strata in the society, for instance in terms of class, age, education level, level and type of employment (Kritzinger, 2002:9). Within these strata housewives are considered consumers with reference to their working husbands who are perceived as producers. This puts the spotlight on the question of unpaid labour time for housewives. Marxist feminists proposed that the domestic labour be paid for and that there should be socialization of the domestic work chores to add value to them as essential for maintaining the capitalist system (Kritzinger, 2002:9).

*From the stories*

Although none of the women working on the projects were informed about the project budget, a promise was made that at some point during the project life time they would receive some stipend. Another promise made to the women was that those who participated in the development projects would be at an advantage in terms of participating in future **paying** development projects. As can be seen from the stories
related, it was only after the women experienced difficulties in attending meetings that they were given this stipend.

The NGOs relied on the social capital (networks and the traditional leadership) to initiate their projects. In all of the stories, the women tell of people (irrespective of their gender) being asked to volunteer their services in the projects. Those elected to volunteer were sent for training in skills to help them run the projects. Women were the majority of the volunteers. As Maduna said, women are the nation builders and their desire to see their communities prosper is why they are so well represented within the structures. Furthermore, according to Nozolile it does not help anybody if people leave their villages because these villages lack proper infrastructure and service delivery. It is better to stand up and make things happen by themselves. She further regards women’s eagerness to make things happen as the main reason for the success of the water projects. According to Nozolile, the lack of proper infrastructure exposes the villagers to water borne diseases and the sick family members become the burden to women, who already have such a lot of work to do. This means that the participation of the women is essential, not only for the improvement of conditions in the villages, but also to relieve the burden on themselves.

The stories of two of the married women in the group (Nozolile and Zoleka) illustrate the labour burden on women and how their families assisted them with this burden. Both women tell of how helpful their husbands are to them. When they are attending meetings the daily domestic chores are not waiting for them when they return home. Nozolile’s husband would cook food for his family in the absence of his wife. Sometimes during the day Nozolile’s husband would wash his clothes because as a former migrant worker in the mines, he used to cook and wash for himself. In the case of the other three women, while they were away from home working on the water project, their children assisted in the house with duties that would normally have been done by the women. The women say in their stories that, the fact that they are active in the water project does not turn them into liabilities for their families.
Implications for water services projects

From the above, it can be seen that the stories show that women’s time and unpaid labour are still being exploited by the system, in this case the NGOs. The stories further illustrate why the women are willing to offer the social capital to the system, namely as they want to improve their own and the village’s living conditions. This means that if the government does not provide basic services, it puts women in this position were they are almost forced to volunteer their social capital just to have a basic standard of living. It therefore emphasizes that the provision of basic services is also a way of advancing gender equality as it lessens the burden on women.

The continual use of women for voluntary unpaid labour disempowers them as they continue to be dependent on their husbands for providing in the needs for their families. This indirectly perpetuates gender inequalities as it puts them at the mercy of their husbands and might result in their voices being silenced. This means that a way should be found for reimbursing women for their time. If training enables women to find employment and to increase their self reliance, such training might be regarded as payment in kind for their time.

The payment for women’s services rendered in these development projects will give them financial independence. This might put into operation a negative feedback loop if paying women in cash results in women being used by men as generators of cash, while they still have to do all the same domestic chores. Project practitioners should be aware of these possible emerging negative implications of remunerating women. It is thus important to use means of remuneration that will make the women empowered. For example, as discussed above, empowerment could be in a form of employment creation and value-adding skills in exchange for their participation in the projects. Such “remuneration” will make them more self-reliant.
The above discussion illustrates the importance of the chores of the women in keeping the system running smoothly. In fact, these duties are so essential that children and husbands had to take responsibility for these duties in the women’s absence. The duties of the women were also socialized when husbands and children shared them. Project practitioners should be conscious of these facts, and should create awareness about the importance of women’s duties, as well as about the need for support for the women in these duties from for instance children, husbands, extended family and community members.

6.3.3 Women’s power within African society

From the literature

According to Michael Foucault (2003:29) power operates as a network that often utilizes human beings as relays of the power. This means that based on our different talents and strengths people are able to exercise power based on their contribution to society or on people’s perception of the importance of their contribution. This brings to light the importance of context with regard to power relations. There is also another form of power, namely inherent power which is exercised through positions within the family and society.

As discussed in the literature on African feminism, motherhood, or the potential of having children, gives women status within the family and society (Maerten, 2004:2). The motherhood status has some form of inherent power as the women at old age are often consulted and their contributions listened to on issues affecting the family’s traditional culture (RHI, 2004).

It is furthermore possible to infer from the discussion of Xhosa culture, that mothering boy-children is very important as boys are supposed to carry the clan or family name to the next generation and are heirs when their fathers die.
From the stories

In their stories, all the women told of how the gender equality policies introduced in the development projects have facilitated gender representation in management structures. Through these policies women were further capacitated with water management skills to run these projects. The processes of leveling the playing field through the 50/50 campaign (50% male to 50% female representation in all the project structures), has created an opportunity for women to showcase their talents and strengths, and their ability to contribute to the community.

This is because women participated unhindered by cultural norms that are applicable at traditional gatherings, for instance that women should only speak to men when spoken to. Now, when women possess the knowledge the village needs, this situation makes the traditional rules irrelevant. The fact that women have been trained in water management by Mvula Trust therefore allows for the bending of the traditional norms. The women have therefore been given power by the creation of opportunities to contribute to the community.

Another aspect of power has been demonstrated in the stories is that of motherhood in African society. Furthermore, when the child is a boy, the power is intensified, as shown in Mabatha’s story. After the death of Mabatha’s father, her uncle started harassing her family with the hope of killing her brother. This would have then allowed the uncles to inherit their livestock, fields and homestead, which would have resulted in Mabatha’s mother being sent back to her home village, taking all her girl-children along.

Implications for water services projects

The first implication is that practitioners should realize that merely by creating an opportunity for women to make a contribution to their communities, they give the women power. Traditional norms are bent under these circumstances. Another fact that practitioners should be aware of is that mothers, and especially mothers of boys, enjoy special privilege in African societies. Therefore, even if certain
women are elected to structures, other women, for instance those without children or mothers of girls, could still be discriminated against.

6.3.4 The role of small causes in women's lives (the Butterfly effect)

From literature

The interactions between the elements and sub-systems in a complex system are fairly rich and non-linear. The interactions of human individuals in postmodern society are growing continuously. Due to the non-linear character of the system, processes such as self-organization, dynamic adaptation and evolution are able to take place. These interactions are asymmetrical as the same information may have different meanings to the same people. Therefore, small causes can have large effects (Cilliers, 1998:120).

Literature on fracticality states that systems exist at different levels of complexity but even so they are also interconnected and interdependent. This means that the impact that causes change in one system, would then affect all the other systems within the whole mega-system. This change would be felt at different times depending on the factors the system is composed of and the nature of the environment is (Levick, 2004:4 and Foucault, 2003:253).

From the stories

The above concepts are very well illustrated in Zoleka's story. A disagreement with her mother-in-law resulted in Zoleka moving out of the house and building her own house with her husband’s money. She then joined a women’s saving society to buy crockery and cutlery for the house. This, in her own words, made her see the world differently, and made her realize that there are opportunities for her to develop. Zoleka visited her husband on the mines where she gathered information that she brought back home to her village at a later stage, which impacted on the community.
In relation to the project, the training given to all five women who are leading the projects allows for the bending of some cultural norms that would forbid women to address and discuss community issues with men in an “imbizo” held at the headman’s place near the kraal. This is because they are the only people who have been trained and know about water in the village, and thus the community has no choice but to give them a platform to speak and discuss all their concerns on the project. The acceptance and adaptation to the new establishment has no time frame and the effects of change might be felt in other spheres (like home).

**Implications for water services projects**

Project practitioners can take comfort from the fact that small causes can have big effects, and that changes introduced at one level will reverberate throughout the entire system. For instance, the impact of project regulations that enforced gender equality and promoted co-operation between men and women within the community will be felt by the human, social and cultural systems. These project rules and regulations cause a butterfly effect in the systems. They might cause the emergence of huge events and thus bring about major changes in these systems’ characteristics.

Introducing these small causes can relate to aspects such as providing women with some training, exposing women to the views and experiences of other women within other projects in other villages, or creating an opportunity for a woman to speak her mind. Furthermore, changes might take time to work through the system, and therefore practitioners should not expect instant results.
6.3.5 The role of fundamental human desires in the women’s lives

From the literature

Human desires are subject to six attractors, namely three attractors that influence human actions towards acquiring power, knowledge and freedom; and three attractors that influence human action towards experiencing love, pleasure and long life (Dimitrov, 1998:2).

From the stories

The attractors of the human system (power, knowledge, freedom, love, pleasure and longevity) are functional in driving these women’s desires even though they are subjected to negative feedback loops which exercise a lot of control or even repression (for instance their parent’s wishes). Mabatha’s story illustrates this concept very well. She wanted to be a teacher and buy her own car, displaying a desire for both knowledge and freedom. However, because of an arranged marriage and ensuing motherhood she did not even manage to finish school. After a few years her husband deserted her and did not financially support the children in the village. She followed him to Johannesburg where she had to get a position at a crèche (not quite becoming a teacher, but working in the same realm) to support her children back home. In Johannesburg she stayed in an informal settlement where she became involved in water projects. After a few years she had to go back to the village as her mother-in-law became ill. Mabatha returned to the village with knowledge about the water projects and now plays a leadership role in the projects.

Implications for the water services projects

Even though these rural women were subjected to norms that regulate them, their fundamental desires have not been affected. They have been shown to be driven by the
same attractors that drive the men’s desires. As in the case of Mabatha, the women welcomed and showed great passion in participating in the only chance they got to be educated or trained, even as adults. This also translated to the passion which they showed in their participation in the water projects by being pro-active and vocal.

This means that project practitioners should understand that regardless of contextual situations such as culture and poverty, all humans (male and female), are driven by the same desires. Therefore, if water services projects can provide a way for women to realize their desires, for instance for knowledge, the projects are empowering to women. For instance if a woman wanted to be a teacher, and this desire was frustrated because of traditional culture, a project can still give her the opportunity to be a community trainer on sanitation issues.

This also means that the project practitioners should spend some time to get to know the women and their dreams and histories, even before designing a project approach. Such an approach would be optimally empowering to women.

6.3.6 Utilising social capital on projects

From the literature

Social capital as a stock of attributes refers not only to a single human being but to a collective. Social capital is therefore a measure of the intangible assets of a community. Because of the local people’s shared values, the community is able to absorb shocks, exploit opportunities and orient itself towards the future together. The sense of a common purpose helps communities find local solutions, thereby increasing the chances of sustainability of development actions (Beeton, 2006:4; De Beer and Swanepoel, 2000:105; and Lichtman, 2003:27).

The South African National 2002 Census Data shows that people in the ELM rural areas are either unemployed or volunteering in the development projects.
From the stories

The “ilima” concept where women and a few men would get together to help each other with work that needs many pairs of hands, such as working in the fields and building houses was mentioned often in the stories the women told. When Mabatha was talking about her childhood she told of how her mother used to invite women from the village to come and assist her with weeding her fields. People used to come and help her with harvesting, especially at the time that her homestead was being attacked and torched from time to time. Even in her years as a married woman she still from time to time asked people for help with work that needed many hands to be accomplished.

The “ilima” concept is a form of social capital that helps the women who head households to sustain their families. It is also an opportunity for the village elders to impart indigenous knowledge to younger people. The negative impact of the government’s agricultural project was cited by all the women in their stories. What was negative was that the project promoted individualism because people no longer worked together in the fields.

Implications for water services projects

Practitioner should use the already existing community institutions like the “ilima” to drive development projects before designing new approaches or introducing foreign concepts. This will ensure minimal time is spent on planning and less financial resources are spent on the process.

Furthermore, it is vital for development planners to be mindful of the externalities or unintended consequences of their actions. Injudicious development can in fact destroy indigenous knowledge systems and social capital. For instance, the “Ilima” institution addresses both material and immaterial capital because the interaction between community members makes the social bonds stronger (immaterial), while on the other hand ensuring that food (material) is made available for the families. It is such local
indigenous institutions that the development practitioner should be careful of not unintentionally destroying.

The development practitioners should also be aware of the positive aspects of traditional culture, of which the “ilima” is one.

6.3.7 The role of funding and donor organizations

*From the literature*

Their strategies of international funding and donor organizations for addressing gender inequalities are based on liberal feminism through an approach that seeks to ensure the protection of individual rights. For example, the strategies have underestimated the existence of unique cultural setups which are different from place to place. Furthermore, the approaches are also guilty of referring to women as belonging to one big homogenous group of oppressed people thereby ignoring the different strata such as class, race, tribe, education level, employment and income level (UNDP, MGWM, 2006: 16,17).

These processes of engendering gender equality are mostly monitored through audits that seek to ensure that women are represented in the structures. The current paradigm for addressing gender inequality is that of gender mainstreaming which is a process of assessing the implications for both women and men of all policies and other planned actions.

*From the stories*

It was hard for the interviewees to explain the objectives and processes of the gender mainstreaming training they received from the NGO. All that they referred to was that
men and women should be equally represented on any structure of the development process (50/50 campaign).

The rigidity and standardization of the mainstreaming gender procedures are not accommodative or informed of the area’s traditional culture and context. This one-size-fits-all approach is visible in that all the women in their stories attended the same water management training which included a brief lecture on gender equality.

In terms of the protection of individual rights, from the stories it is clear that public participation was seen as the key to giving women a voice to speak for themselves. This view is based on the principle of the democratic right to individual freedom principle (Msimang, 2002:7). This principle is foreign in the rural culture that views life from a collective ethos of “ubuntu”. For instance, Mabatha explains “lobola” as a process (not an event) where families build relations through the marriage of two people. She says that this is an extension of the clan or tribe and is based on a collective mindset where all work for the benefit of the whole rather than for the individual.

*Implications for water services projects*

Project practitioners should be aware of the fact that even if public participation was done as part of the gender mainstreaming, as a result of the existing cultural norms, women’s participation in development projects does not automatically mean that they are speaking on their own behalf. Women could be acting as representatives of the family or the clan. It is thus important for practitioners to investigate the community’s cultural norms that are at play before embarking on actions to mainstream gender into projects.

This also implies that the implementation strategies for gender mainstreaming should be flexible enough to accommodate different social and cultural contexts. Rigid one-size-fits-all solutions, such as an uncritical application of the 50/50 campaign, do not reflect the underlying cultural complexities of the society.
Furthermore, the guidelines of foreign donor and development agencies have to be moderated through local context and by the input of local actors before they are implemented in the field. In essence, the guidelines have to be manufactured in the field.

6.3.8 Society as a complex system

*From literature*

A society is a complex open system which has cultural norms and values that hold the community together through networks and trust. These networks can be subjected to new information that often causes a reverberation in the whole system and its sub-systems, be it individual men, sometimes women, or those who feel some level of uncertainty caused by the change (Levick, 2004:4 and Situngkir, 2002:5,6). The asymmetry (different voices or skills that determine power relations) of the system and the environment (context) will determine how the system will bifurcate in response to the reverberations (Cilliers, 2002:120).

This is where the butterfly effect can often be seen in the system, in that small events can lead to huge manifestations. The interactions between elements of a system give the entire system meaning and character. This could refer to the cultural aspects in society that involve interactions between people based on values and norms that characterize a community (Cilliers, 2002:120).

*From the stories*

The women explained that gender equality procedures in the developmental projects were introduced by highlighting the need for equal gender representation and respect for the democratic rights of each individual, as inscribed in the country’s constitution. From the women’s stories it was common that introduction of the gender equality clause
by the Mvula Trust Development Officers, was met with mixed emotions, especially from the men.

All of the women interviewed took the opportunity they received when they were elected to manage the projects. The fact that they played a leadership role, either in the CSPC or the VWC, caused some reverberations in the societal system. Some resistance was experienced from the men who saw their status of being the heads of the villages or homesteads threatened. The introduction of the new information therefore caused a period of uncertainty in the system. The gender equality principles and applications acted as a feedback loop which increased the instability in the system. At such a time, the system is producing a lot of information that cannot be grasped as it is too much, especially for the person heading the process. What is needed is the introduction of an opposite feedback loop to counter-act the instability. This could be done through either convincing influential people in the community to buy into the process by showing them the positive rewards the procedure can bring to the community, or by convincing them of the ethical aspect of the process.

*Implications for water services projects*

It is the role of the development practitioner to understand the system’s processes and impacts. This can be an impossible task if he or she relies only on his or her own understanding of the system. The practitioner should rather ask community members to help him or her understand the deeper reasons why and how community processes unfold. Furthermore the practitioner should take note of and understand the processes of change in a society confronted with new information.

The asymmetry of the society can be an advantage which the practitioner can use by “selling” the gender equality to influential members of the community to obtain their buy-in.
6.3.9 The effects of migration on the women's lives

From the literature

It is difficult to measure social capital, but the presence or absence of social capital can be sensed because a community without social capital lacks cohesion. Social cohesion helps the society to use its human capital effectively for the benefit of all (Meadows, 2000:381). Emigration can be indicative of low functional social capital within a community as the human capital moves to other areas (Beeton, 2006:4).

Traditional villages are characterized by immobile and decentralized communities that can suffer from insularity, narrowness of ideas and viewpoints. This will also lead to the suppression of deviance and suspiciousness of innovation (Meadows, 2000:382). Therefore, whereas immobility can lead to strong social capital as people know each other, it can also lead to inbreeding and narrowness in thinking.

However, society is an open system where information flows internally and externally. No society is therefore completely insulated from the influence of the external environment. Regarding human cultural systems, the impact of these external influences is mostly experienced in terms of those entities that determine social behavior, such as the norms and values of a society (Beeton, 2006:4).

From the stories

All the women who were interviewed had at some point of their life been out of the village and thus exposed to the urban or city life. Mabatha tells in her story about her journey to Johannesburg to look for her husband. Here she became involved in community structures and development projects. This was then her first time exposure to water projects and she brought the experience back to the village when she decided to come back as her mother-in-law was getting old and sick.
Nozolile used to visit her husband when he was still working at the Johannesburg City Bus Company and this is where she discovered a way of reaching financial self reliance by joining a women’s social club (Stokvels).

Sara studied typing, computer courses and dress making in Johannesburg when she was there looking for work before coming back to nurse her mother after one of her sisters passed away.

Implications for water services projects

It does have an adverse effect on the villages if people leave in search of employment, as it creates a void of indigenous knowledge and human capital. Furthermore, the exposure people then get to foreign cultures and traditions can sometimes cause disturbances in the existing social networks.

However, in the long term the positive effects of migration were more important. People came back to the villages with new skills. This exposure to alternatives is a form of human capital. For instance, Mabatha explained in community meetings how they dealt with hygiene issues in the water projects of the Johannesburg informal settlement. This increase in knowledge is a form of power, as already discussed.

Project practitioners have to understand that the communities with which they work are often insular and the people are cut off from contact with the outside world. In such cases, the new ideas such as gender mainstreaming introduced by the project will have an impact on the norms and values of these societies. The project is therefore and opportunity to introduce new values about gender equality into communities.

Furthermore, the project can serve as an instrument to break the insularity of the people. For instance, people leave their villages to go for training on the project, and opportunities can be created for people from different communities to work together. These strategies will encourage the flow of information and will slowly change the norms and values of the community.
6.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter data of the study was analyzed where the information from the data stories was linked to the literature that was reviewed. Through this concept the events and the details of the stories were mirrored through and viewed through the lens of the theory reviewed earlier.
7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the conclusion and recommendation of the study. The limitations of the study were highlighted, and the recommendations for further research and Implication of research findings on policy.

7.2 Revisiting the motivation for the research, research questions and research process

Traditional culture is seen in the South African context as a hindrance to gender equality in the water sector. The perceptions about gender roles in traditional culture have an impact on decision-making arrangements; access to power resources; public participation; and access to water itself (Maharaj, 2003:6).

Gender equality is guaranteed in Chapter 2 (9.3) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the water and sanitation policy has quotas for the participation of women in water management issues (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Chapter 2 (9.3) and Maharaj, 2003:7).

Despite the above it has been found that adhering to the water and sanitation gender policy quotas does not guarantee meaningful participation of women. This is because, among other reasons, women are often reluctant to voice their opinions in meetings with men present due to cultural constraints, lack of appropriate knowledge and poor self concept (Maharaj, 2003:6). To illustrate this point, according to Maharaj (2003:7), cultural norms forbid women to assert themselves in public forums with men, because gender equity is not promoted at household level. These cultural norms are often not congruent with the principles of gender equity (Maharaj, 2003:6).
In dealing with this Maharaj (2003:7) suggests that customs should be challenged and changes in social behavior be promoted in a sensitive way. Some suggestions would for instance be to deliberately include female project staff, to use gender experts, to do special planning for holding meetings and to ensure the involvement of all sections of the community.

Therefore, there are suggestions on the table for dealing with the possible negative impacts of traditional culture. However, these actions are often prescribed to communities from the outside by project practitioners. Such external prescriptions cannot challenge fundamental gender relations in society. In fact, as was discussed in this study, these might disrupt the society.

Therefore, the basis of this study was to create greater understanding of how to address the possible negative impact of traditional culture on gender mainstreaming on water services projects, by looking from the inside outwards. This means that the study was conducted from the viewpoint of women involved in gender mainstreamed water services projects.

Accordingly, the research aimed to address the following research questions:

- How do cultural dynamics interact with the various roles of women in the family, the community and the water services project?
- How can an improved understanding of the above interactions be utilized by project practitioners on water services projects to engage with the possible negative impacts of traditional culture?

To answer the research questions for this study, a narrative, in-depth story telling approach was adopted for data collection. The stories of five women involved in the water projects were recorded. The interviews with these women took place in three
phases. In the first interview, her life story was told, in the second interview she was asked about her involvement in the projects, and in the third interview the connections between her life story and her involvement in the projects were discussed.

### 7.3 Method of deriving recommendations

As discussed above, the aim of this research was to open a space of knowledge in relation to the impact of culture on gender mainstreaming in water and sanitation projects. That space of understanding was created by making connections between the theory reviewed for this project, and the women’s stories, and from these connections, deriving implications for water services projects.

In this manner conclusions regarding the following themes could be drawn:

1. Women’s time and labour
2. Women’s power within African societies
3. The role of small causes in women’s lives (the Butterfly effect)
4. The role of fundamental human desires in the women’s lives
5. Utilising social capital on projects
6. The role of funding and donor organizations
7. Society as a complex system
8. The effects of migration on the women’s lives

### 7.4 Findings and recommendations

#### 7.4.1 Women’s time and labour

Women’s time and labour are still being exploited by NGOs. All five participants to the study highlighted that it was for the benefit of community members to volunteer their services and time in any development projects as the volunteers would be the first to be considered for employment should the opportunity arises. The signals of exploitation
were that there were no time-frames accompanying these promises by the NGOs. Women stood up and enquired about remuneration which would assist them should they have a meeting to attend in town about the water project. This money would also help them to buy airtime for their cellular phones to deal with emergencies within the water projects.

Therefore, the continued use of women’s time and labour without remuneration is disempowering as it might cause the women to continue to be financially dependent on their husbands. There is therefore a need to find ways of reimbursing women for their time and labour spent on the projects – not only financially, as cash payments might expose the women to another form of exploitation in that their husbands might then expect them to generate income while still taking responsibility for the same household chores.

7.4.2 Women’s power within African societies

Motherhood, and the mothering of boys, hold special power in African societies, and therefore practitioners should understand that women themselves are not a homogenous group. Therefore, the power relations within women as a group, can result in for instance childless women or mothers of girls being discriminated against. Mabatha’s story about her uncles who attempted several times to kill Mabatha’s family especially her brother (who was the only boy-child was traditionally the heir of livestock and homestead Mabath’s father had left when he died). If it was not for Mabatha’s brother her mother and her sister would have been sent back to her mother’s village to start a new life. This was also the case in Sara’s family, that after her father died her family was able to return from Johannesburg to the rural village because of Sara’s younger brother.

Merely by creating an opportunity for women to make a contribution to their communities, project practitioners are opening up a space for women to access power. Under these conditions, the traditional norms in the community often become irrelevant.
7.4.3 The role of small causes in women’s lives (the Butterfly effect)

Implementing relatively small interventions in women’s lives, such as providing them with training and opportunities to voice their needs, might have large impacts outside of the project sphere. These changes in the women’s lives will reverberate across the system to change traditional norms and values. However, these changes might not be immediately apparent, but will take time to work through the system. The women stories in the study agreed that the training they engaged in boosted their self esteem and self affirmation. This situation gave women

The women note that the application of the 50% Female and 50% Male representation in development project initially encountered some resistance from men who saw it as women taking over. However allowing women to work together with men will help bring the same spirit of gender equality and respect outside of the water project, in homes and other community structures.

7.4.4 The role of fundamental human desires in the women’s lives

Although rural women are subjected to traditional customs their fundamental human desires are not affected. The way in which they interpret and realize these desires is based on their context. For instance, if Mabatha aspired to a teacher, and this desire was frustrated because of traditional culture, a project can still give her the opportunity to be a community trainer on sanitation issues. The aspirations and desires the women expressed in their stories manifested through the projects.

7.4.5 Utilising social capital on projects

In the interest of saving time and resources, project practitioners should use existing community institutions and skills, rather than introduce foreign concepts. This will also strengthen these community institutions of social capital. Furthermore, practitioners should be aware of the unintended consequences of their actions that might destroy
indigenous knowledge systems and social capital and they should be mindful of the positive elements of traditional culture.

Nozolile mentioned in her story that the Government’s programs of helping villagers with ploughing and planting fields ignored the existing local social capital tools that were existed. This is because through the existence of indigenous institutions like “ilima” relied on interdependence between community members for its success. Meanwhile the Government’s program unintendently threatened to destroy the social capital as its consequences made people to work independently.

7.4.6 The role funding and donor organizations

Foreign organizations operate out of an individualistic framework, which is not applicable in the African collective context. Therefore, even if public participation was done as part of the gender mainstreaming, as a result of the collective cultural norms, women’s participation in development projects does not automatically mean that they are speaking on their own behalf.

Furthermore, a rigid application of one-size-fits-all approaches, such as the 50/50 campaign, should not be used as the only tool to address gender equality. The local context and the input of local actors should be taken into consideration before these approaches are implemented in the field. In essence, guidelines should be manufactured in the field.

This phenomenon was revealed in Nozolile’s story where the “ilima” concept was unintentionally under attack from development programs by ignoring the context and applying a one-size-fits-all approach with rigid guidelines.
7.4.7 Society as a complex system

The practitioner should rely on the community to help him or her understand the system’s processes of change. By understanding how and why community processes unfold, the practitioner will be able to use for instance the asymmetry in the system to “sell” gender equality by involving influential members of the society in the projects. In the women’s stories it came out that the NGO was introduced in the villages by the village leadership in the form of Councilor and Headman. The expanding the scope of the consultation would have brought more insight.

7.4.8 The effects of migration on the women’s lives

Although migration can have a negative impact on social capital, exposing people to external influences can equip them with new skills and therefore add to the social capital if they come back to the village. Projects can act as a way of breaking the insularity of people by exposing them to new concepts, such as gender equality, and by exposing them to other people’s experiences on water services projects. Such strategies will encourage the flow of information and will slowly change the norms and values of the community.

What has been common in the stories the five women in this study told is that at some point in their lives they left the villages to either settle or visit to the urban town. This migration exposed them to new lifestyles that empowered them and exposed their capabilities and self-belief.

7.5 Limitations and recommendation for further research

The research project investigated the impact of traditional culture on gender mainstreaming from the point of view of women by listening to stories of the women involved in gender mainstreaming of water services projects. The study results highlighted the importance of both women and men working together in the project. It
would thus be necessary to hear the men's views and stories on how gender mainstreaming and traditional culture impact on the men.

7.6 Implications of the research project

In this project, the complexity approach followed succeeded in highlighting underlying complexities that might impact on water services projects. The research was aimed at improved understanding of these complexities, and not at delivering definitive solutions to the possible negative impact of traditional culture on water services projects.

The use of the complexity approach is a post-modern tool that is based on understanding the entities at play. In this paradigm it is acceptable that the same people might experience the same process differently because of differences in context. It recognizes that change in an open system like society, culture and human beings is unavoidable.

Therefore when a project practitioner deals with culture, he/she does not have to try to tackle traditional culture head on by for instance proposing defiance of the norms or by illegalizing these norms. Rather, the practitioner should obtain information about the system (society or culture) to give him or her insight into the subsystems at play within the larger context. This insight will enable the practitioner to use the characteristics of complex systems along with the principle of fractalicty to address the need for cultural change. As an example, providing women with some training, will cause changes in the women themselves, (possibly large changes) and these changes will reverberate throughout the fractals (the family, the community, the water projects, the society), eventually bringing about change in the cultural norms of the larger society.

This complexity paradigm adopted here can sometimes cause delays in application because the results rely on organic processes. In development projects, time and resources are not always available to accommodate such organic processes. Therefore, the system has to be carefully manipulated to effect the desired changes.
However, the greater contextually based understanding that the practitioner has gained by adopting the complexity approach, will enable him or her to select the optimal way of manipulating the system.

The approach advocated here results in a merging of the bottom-up approach (giving people voice and developing community-based solutions) and the top-down approach (applying external resources to achieve a preconceived outcome).

### 7.7 Implication of the research on policy and framework

In terms of the gender mainstreaming policy, this study demonstrates the practicality of the bottom-up approach that further informs who should be involved and how they should be involved during the policy formulation processes.

The study however, notes the critical and important role played by the top-down instruments such as the constitution and laws that ensures the enforcement of gender parity in all processes. For an example the 50% male and 50% female representations in development structures has brought consciousness and has thus stimulated the debate on this issue in the communities. The gender equality legislation has initiated the processes of change within these communities. However, its successes are however unfortunately interpreted and measured in numbers that often fail to measure the underlying social, individual and cultural complexities that are at play.

The study thus, stresses the importance of a flexible and/or a non-one-size-fits-all policy framework that allows the organic evolution and adaptation processes within communities to take place at the local level. This is in accordance with the society’s context in terms of history, traditions and culture. The policy framework’s guidelines (through a top-down approach) therefore, need to be introduced in a manner that allows the community to have a voice in the processes of generating solutions (bottom-up
approach). As suggested in the findings that the flexibility of the guidelines can through drawing the community the policy has been applied to right there in that community.
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ANNEXURE A:
GRAPHS AND TABLES OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC INFORMATION
FOR THE ENGCobo LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Figure A1: Engcobo Local Municipality Settlement Graph

Figure A2: Engcobo Local Municipality Age-Sex Pyramid
Figure A3: Highest Education Level in Engcobo Local Municipality

Figure A4: Migration patterns for Engcobo Local Municipality

Figure A5: Sanitation Facilities at Engcobo Local Municipality

A- Flush toilet (connected to sewerage system); B- Flush toilet (with septic tank); C- Chemical toilet; D- Pit latrine with ventilation (VIP); E- Pit latrine without ventilation; F- Bucket latrine; G- None.
Figure A6: Water Supplies and Sources at the Engcobo Local Municipality

- **A**- Piped water inside dwelling; **B**- Piped water inside yard; **C**- Piped water on community stand: distance less than 200m from dwelling; **D**- Piped water on community stand: distance greater than 200m from dwelling; **E**- Boreholes; **F**- Springs; **G**- Rain-water tank; **H**- Dam/Pool/Stagnant water; **I**- River/Stream; **J**- Water Vendor; and **K**- Others

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<th>Female</th>
<th>% Females</th>
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<td>64,402</td>
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<td>&gt;R1 601</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>80,994</td>
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Table A1: Income levels for Engcobo Local Municipality
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<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Agriculture, hunting; forestry and fishing</td>
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<td>Mining and quarrying</td>
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<td>Electricity; gas and water supply</td>
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<td>Construction</td>
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<td>Transport; storage and communication</td>
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<td>Financial, insurance, real estate and business services</td>
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<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community, social and personal services</td>
<td>899</td>
<td>1,606</td>
<td>2,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Households</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>1,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>27,672</td>
<td>39,773</td>
<td>67,445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30,306</td>
<td>43,063</td>
<td>73,369</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A2: Employment sector data for Engcobo Local Municipality
ANNEXURE B:
GRAPHS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC INFORMATION
FOR THE VILLAGES VISITED

Data from the Census 2001 was used to create the age-sex pyramid of three villages where the study data was collected and these are namely, Khanyi, Rasmeni and Lwandlana villages. These three villages are part the greater ELM

Figure B1: Age-Sex Pyramid of Khanyi Village

Figure B2: Rasmeni (Upper Qolweni) Age-Sex Pyramid
Figure B3: Lwandlana Age-Sex Pyramid

Figure B4: Highest Education Level at Khanyi Village
Figure B5: Highest Education Level at Rasmeni (Upper Qolweni) Village

![Highest Education Level Graph](image)

Figure B6: Highest Education Level at Lwandlana Village

![Water Infrastructure and Sources](image)

Figure B7: Water Supplies and Sources at Khanyi Village

A- Piped water inside dwelling; B- Piped water inside yard; C- Piped water on community stand: distance less than 200m from dwelling; D- Piped water on community stand: distance greater than 200m from dwelling; E- Boreholes; F- Springs; G- Rain-water tank; H- Dam/Pool/Stagnant water; I- River/ Stream; J- Water Vendor; and K- Others. (Also Applies to Figure B8 and Figure B9)
Figure B8: Water Supplies and Sources at Rasmeni (Upper Qolweni) Village

Figure B9: Water Supplies and Sources at Lwandlana Village

Figure B10: Sanitation Facilities at Khanyi Village
A- Flush toilet (connected to sewerage system); B- Flush toilet (with septic tank); C- Chemical toilet; D- Pit latrine with ventilation (VIP); E- Pit latrine without ventilation; F- Bucket latrine; G- None. (Also for Figure B11 and Figure B12)

Figure B11: Sanitation Facilities at Rasmeni (Upper Qolweni) Village

Figure B12: Sanitation Facilities at Lwandlana Village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income level</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%Males</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>%Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No income</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1 - R400</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R401 - R800</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R801 - R1 600</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;R1 601</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table B1: Lwandlana Village - Income Level Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income level</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%Males</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>% Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No income</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1 - R400</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R401 - R800</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R801 - R1 600</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;R1 601</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>61.59</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Table B2: Khanyi Village Income Levels