

"อำนาจ" ของผู้หญิงในชุมชนคนจนเมืองในกรุงเทพฯ



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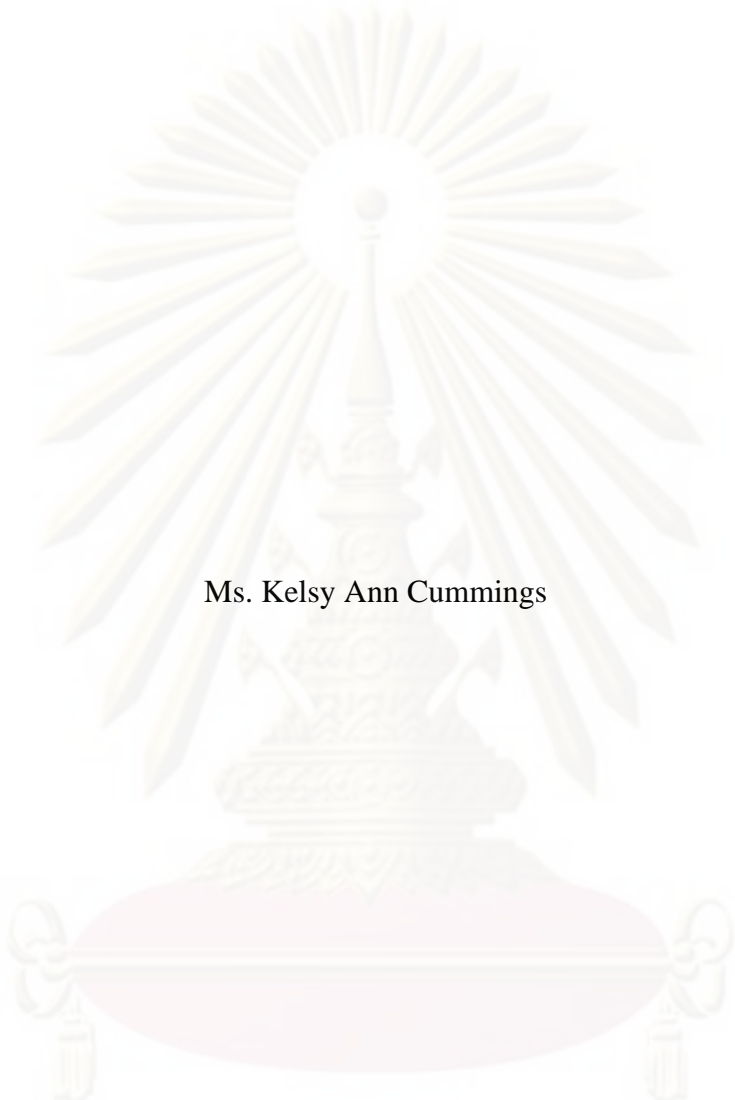
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WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN BANGKOK URBAN POOR AREAS



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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in International Development Studies

Faculty of Political Science


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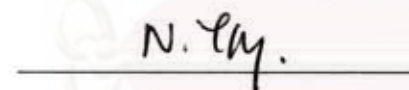
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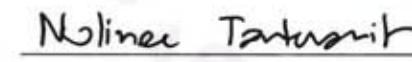
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"อำนาจ" ของผู้หญิงนั้นถูกมองว่าเป็นปัจจัยที่สำคัญปัจจัยหนึ่งในการสนับสนุนการพัฒนาทั้งในระดับครอบครัว ระดับชุมชนและในระดับประเทศ องค์การพัฒนาเอกชนทั่วโลกและในประเทศไทยมักจะพัฒนาโครงการและกิจกรรมที่ส่งเสริมการเพิ่มอำนาจให้กับผู้หญิง งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ที่สำคัญ 2 ประการ คือ ประการแรก เพื่อศึกษาว่ามูลนิธิดวงประทีป ซึ่งเป็น องค์กรพัฒนาเอกชนที่ทำงานในพื้นที่กรุงเทพมหานครประสบความสำเร็จในการเพิ่มอำนาจให้กับผู้หญิงในชุมชนคนจนเมืองในพื้นที่คลองเตย และประการที่สอง เพื่อศึกษาว่าผู้หญิงที่เป็นคนจนนั้นให้ความหมายของอำนาจและการเพิ่มอำนาจได้อย่างไร

ในงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ ผู้วิจัยได้ทำการการวิจัยเอกสาร โดยมีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อประเมินข้อมูลและเอกสารที่ได้มีการบันทึกเผยแพร่ในปัจจุบันเพื่อศึกษาช่องว่างทางความรู้ในประเด็นดังกล่าว และเพื่อนิยามกรอบคิดที่สำคัญ หลังจากการวิจัยเอกสารและทบทวนวรรณกรรมในปัจจุบันแล้ว ผลการวิจัยพบว่ายังขาดการศึกษาในเรื่องการเพิ่มอำนาจให้กับผู้หญิงพื้นที่จนเมืองในประเทศไทย ดังนั้นงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้จึงมีความมุ่งหมายเพื่อเติมเต็มช่องว่างดังกล่าว

ผู้วิจัยได้ทำการศึกษาถึงทัศนะของผู้หญิงต่อมุมมองเรื่อง "อำนาจ" และการเพิ่มอำนาจ และตลอดจนศึกษาถึงความสำเร็จในการเพิ่มอำนาจให้กับผู้หญิงของมูลนิธิดวงประทีป ผู้ศึกษาได้ทำการสัมภาษณ์ผ่านแบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกกับผู้หญิงจำนวน 7 คน ในพื้นที่ชุมชนคนจนเมืองคลองเตย โดยผู้หญิงผู้ถูกสัมภาษณ์เหล่านี้ได้เข้าร่วมกิจกรรมและโครงการที่มูลนิธิดวงประทีปเป็นผู้ริเริ่มขึ้น

หลังจากการรวบรวมและประเมินข้อมูล งานวิจัยพบว่าโครงการของมูลนิธิดวงประทีปและกิจกรรมต่างๆที่ทางมูลนิธิจัดขึ้น มีส่วนเพิ่มความมีอำนาจให้กับผู้หญิงที่ได้เข้าร่วมกิจกรรม อย่างไรก็ตาม ผลการศึกษาในครั้งนี้มิได้นำเสนอนิยามใหม่หรือมุมมองใหม่ต่อแนวคิดเรื่อง "อำนาจ" และการเพิ่มอำนาจแต่อย่างใด

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Women's empowerment is viewed as a valid contributing factor for development at a household, community, and countrywide level. NGOs around the world and in Thailand often develop projects and activities to encourage women's empowerment. This study has two purposes. One is to determine if Duang Prateep Foundation (DPF), a Thai NGO in Bangkok is successful in empowering women in Khlong Toei Urban Poor Area; and the second is to determine how poor women define empowerment.

The Literature Review was conducted with the aim of evaluating the current literature on the topic; to uncover a Knowledge Gap and to define Key Concepts. After a review of the current literature it was discovered that there is a lack of studies pertaining women's empowerment in Urban Poor Areas in Thailand. Thus, this study seeks to fill this gap.

To determine how women view empowerment, and if DPF is successful in empowering women, a questionnaire was administered to seven women in Khlong Toei Urban Poor Area, who have been involved in activities and projects initiated by DPF. Questionnaires were administered with the aid of a Thai translator

After an evaluation of the data, it was found that DPF's projects and activities generally increase empowerment for the women are involved with them. However, this study did not establish any new ways of defining empowerment.

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Student's signature: K Cummings

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ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction to the Problem

In recent years women's empowerment has become an important factor for development on a worldwide scale. When the concept of empowerment first came to the attention of Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) and Government Agencies around the world, it was viewed as an alternative approach to development and many development agencies initially ignored the concept. However, due to the failure of top-down development approaches, the concept of empowerment emerged as a valid contributing factor to development and has since been adopted by mainstream agencies. (Parpart, Rai & Staudt, 2001: 3).

Defining and measuring empowerment is not an easy task, as it is not a static process. A commonly accepted definition of empowerment is: "The expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them," (Malhotra, 2000: 3). Moreover, empowerment can be defined and measured in many different spaces, dimensions and indicators. Please see Table 1: Empowerment: Spaces, Dimensions and Indicators in Chapter II: Literature Review for an extensive chart outlining the spaces, dimensions and indicators of empowerment.

Several NGOs all over the world have focused programs to increase women's empowerment. Some NGOs include: Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development and Peace (WLP), which focuses particularly in Muslim countries to empower women;¹ Women for Women International, which seeks to mobilize women in

¹ <http://learningpartnership.org/en/about>

conflict or post-conflict countries;² and Sisterhood Agenda, which focuses on the empowerment of women of African heritage in over 30 countries.³

In Thailand several NGOs also work to empower women. NGOs include Women's Education for Advancement and Empowerment (WEAVE), which teaches indigenous women to become socially, economically and politically empowered;⁴ Goodwill Group Foundation, which assists disadvantaged women in several different ways, including English Training, Computer Training, Vocational Training and Micro-lending;⁵ and EMPOWER Foundation, which supports women in the sex industry.⁶ It is important to evaluate NGOs effectiveness in empowering women in order to construct more effective programs.

This study seeks to examine the impact the NGOs have on women's empowerment in Bangkok.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The role that NGOs have on women's empowerment in Urban Poor Areas will be examined in this thesis. A key priority of this research is to determine how women in urban poor areas define empowerment. NGOs have recorded success in empowering women in other areas of the world, and the researcher would like to see if the same is occurring in Bangkok. What is needed to know further is the role that NGOs play in women's empowerment in Bangkok. Thus, this research will allow for a better

² <http://www.womenforwomen.org/about-women-for-women/we-support-womensurvivors-globally.php>

³ <http://www.sisterhoodagenda.com>

⁴ <http://www.weave-women.org/>

⁵ <http://goodwillbangkok.org/ourPrograms.asp>

⁶ http://www.empowerfoundation.org/index_en.html

understanding of the role organizations play on women's empowerment in Bangkok, and will allow recommendations to be made.

More specifically this research seeks to examine the impact that Duang Prateep Foundation (DPF) has on women's empowerment in the urban poor area of Khlong Toei in Bangkok, Thailand.

1.3 Statement of Purpose

Women's empowerment is viewed as a valid contributing factor to development. Many NGOs around the world, and in Thailand have programs and activities centered on empowering women. This study has a dual purpose. The first purpose of this study is to determine if DPF, a Thai NGO, is successful in empowering women in Bangkok Urban Poor Areas. The second purpose is to discover how women themselves define empowerment and how they view empowerment. These questions will be answered through the means of a questionnaire.

1.4 Rationale

The research for this thesis was undertaken for several reasons. First, as it will be seen in Chapter 2: Literature Review, there is little research on the effect that NGOs have on women's empowerment in Bangkok urban poor areas. Therefore research already conducted has not satisfactorily answered the key questions of the research. However, it is important to note that research papers on the topic may have been published in the Thai language, which unfortunately the researcher cannot read.

Second, women's empowerment can lead to a plethora of positive outcomes for the woman, her community, and possibly the country. Such positive impacts include reduced fertility rate and delayed pregnancies; higher levels of education for women and their children; higher incomes; more contribution to the economy;

reduced child mortality rates; a general sense of well-being for the women; etc, (Kabeer, 1999).

Third, “To talk about development without a specific focus on women is seen as wasteful and self-defeating,” (Bhavani, 2006: 139). Women make up about half of the world’s population, yet lack many rights and entitlements that their male counterparts enjoy. It is important to ensure that women are able to live up to their full potential, and this can be done through the means of empowerment.

Fourth, this study was undertaken because the researcher is very interested in exploring empowerment in developing countries.

1.5 Objectives of Research

The primary objectives of this research are:

- To identify whether or not a women’s participation in a movement/organization in urban poor areas contributes to her empowerment
- To explore ways to improve women’s empowerment process in urban poor areas
- To discover the impact that women’s empowerment has on the public and private sphere
- To determine how women in urban poor areas define and measure empowerment

1.6 Research Questions

This research undertaken sought to answer the following questions:

- What are women's lived experiences in Bangkok urban poor areas?
 - Economic; Cultural; Familial; Social, etc (See questionnaire after references).
- What are the views, of women in urban poor areas in Bangkok, on empowerment and power?
- What is the role of organizations in empowering women in urban poor areas in Bangkok?

1.7 Definition of Concepts

The key Concepts of this thesis, Empowerment, Urban Poor Areas and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) will now be defined.

1.7.1 Empowerment

Empowerment refers to, "The expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them," (Malhotra, 2000: 3). Empowerment can be measured in various different dimensions, including economic, socio-cultural, familial/interpersonal, etc. It can be measured in three key spaces, including household, community, and broader areas. There are several indicators under each dimension and space. Please see Chapter 2: Literature Review section for a full chart.

It is important to note that the latter are academic definitions of empowerment. This study seeks to expand the definition of empowerment to include how women define empowerment.

1.7.2 Urban Poor Areas

Urban poor areas are also known as slums, thus the definition of slums will help to define Urban Poor Areas, which is “A heavily populated urban area characterized by substandard housing and squalor,” (UNHSP, 2003: 8). It has certain characteristics, including a lack of basic services; substandard housing of illegal and inadequate building structures; overcrowding and high density; and unhealthy living conditions and hazardous conditions, (UNHSP, 2003: 8).

A definition adopted by the UN, for an urban poor area is a “...restricted to the physical and legal characteristics of the settlement,” and also includes the social dimensions, which are far harder to measure, (Davies, 2006: 23). It is estimated that there are approximately 200,000 Urban poor areas in the world, with populations ranging from a few hundred to more than a million, (Davies, 2006: 23)

1.7.3 Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)

In the broadest sense a NGO refers to an organization, which is not based in the government, and has not been created to earn profit.⁷ Other accepted definitions of NGOs includes “...a wide range of organizations, which are often differentiated in terms of geographic scope, substantive issue area, and/or type of activity,” and “Any such organization that is not established by a governmental entity or intergovernmental agreement...” (Betsill & Corell, 2008: 4).

There are two main typologies of NGOs, Operational and Advocacy. Operational NGOs’ activity is directed, “...towards the contribution or delivery of welfare services, including emergency relief, and environmental protection and management.”⁸ Advocacy

⁷

http://www.adb.org/Documents/Policies/Cooperation_with_NGOs/ngo_sector.asp?p=coo

ngos

⁸ Ibid

NGOs are "...NGOs whose primary orientation is toward the advocacy of policies or actions that address specific concerns, points of view, or interests."⁹

However, often times NGOs can be both Operational and engaged in Advocacy, which is the case of DPF.

NGO can be classified by several characteristics:

- Purpose
- Operational orientation
- Approach (service delivery, participatory, etc)
- Degree of Openness¹⁰

1.8 Research Methodology

This study was based both on desk-based research and ethnographic research. Desk-based research was conducted in the library and on the Internet. Desk-based research served primarily as sources for the literature review and for definitions of key concepts. Desk-based research began approximately five months before the collection of primary data. Secondary research was evaluated to ensure it was up to date, pertinent and reliable.

Primary data was collected through interviews with women in Khlong Toei Urban Poor Area, executed through a questionnaire. The researcher requested from staff at DPF to set up interviews with women who are involved with DPF. The researcher requested

⁹

http://www.adb.org/Documents/Policies/Cooperation_with_NGOs/ngo_sector.asp?p=coo

ngos

¹⁰ Ibid

interviews to be conducted with 8 women. However, due to time constraints only seven interviews were conducted. The seven women interviewed were various ages, had various incomes, had different life experiences; etc. Thus the sample was very varied and random.

Interviews were conducted with the aid of two translators. One translator helped to administer two interviews, while another helped with five interviews. Interviews were conducted over a period of three weeks, and lasted 1.5-2 hours. The questionnaire survey was both open-ended and closed-ended and designed by the researcher. It collected general demographic information (age, marital status, monthly income, etc); and also allowed for elaboration of many questions (including additional personal information and their definition of empowerment).

The researcher was present for all of the interviews, and asked translators to ask the women interviewed to elaborate on certain questions when it was required. Interviews took place at DPF over the course of three weeks.

1.9 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is, if a woman takes part in Duang Prateep's activities, seminars, meetings, etc., it will positively contribute to her empowerment. Empowerment will be analyzed according to the academic measurement of empowerment, through an analysis of the chart from Table 1: Empowerment: Spaces, Dimension and Indicators in Chapter II: Literature Review.

1.10 Limitations of Research

The first limitation of this study is the language barrier. Although both of the researcher's translators were fluent in English, some comments made by the women

interviewed may have been ‘lost in translation’. One of the researcher’s translators stated that the concept of empowerment is quite difficult to translate into the Thai language.

A second limitation was the limited amount of time allocated to conduct research and write the thesis. If more time had been available, more interviews would have been conducted.

Third, as stated initially it was hoped that research could be conducted with eight to nine women involved with several organization in Bangkok Urban Poor Areas. However, due to limited and no response from many organizations it was settled that DPF would serve as the case study.

Finally, the researcher lacks experience in conducting scholarly research, and evaluation of data.

1.11 Thesis Organization

This Thesis is divided into five chapters. The chapters will now briefly be discussed.

Chapter I: Introduction of the Study, introduces the problem, statement of purpose, discusses the rationale behind research, clarifies objectives of research and research questions; outlines key terms, including empowerment, urban poor areas and NGOs; introduces the research method and discusses the limitations of research.

Chapter II: Literature Review, outlines current research as it relates to this study in terms of empowerment, urban poor areas and pertinent case studies; and finally outlines the knowledge gap. Empowerment and case studies from India, Chile and

Kenya are also discussed, as well a discussion on the limitations of political empowerment in those countries, as well as Thailand.

Chapter III: Profile of Study Area and Women Interviewed, discusses the research area, which includes Thailand, Khlong Toei urban poor area, and Duang Prateep Foundation. This chapter also provides an in-depth profile of each of the women interviewed.

Chapter IV: Findings and Analysis, discusses and analyzes the findings of research, as they relate to women's lived experiences, views of empowerment and the role DPF has in empowering women. Charts are used to better display the findings of the research.

Section V: Conclusions and Recommendations, summarizes and analyzes the results of the questionnaire, and how the results relate to the purpose of study; research problem; research questions and hypothesis. This section also compares empowerment in Thailand with India, Chile and Kenya; discusses political empowerment in all countries; and discusses how empowerment can be a contributing factor for democracy. Recommendations are also given in this chapter.

1.12 Summary of Introduction

As already stated this section introduces the problem, statement of purpose, discusses the rationale behind research, clarifies objectives of research and research questions; outlines key terms, including empowerment, urban poor areas and NGOs; clarifies the research method and discusses limitations of research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will be divided into four sections. The first will discuss empowerment in general, followed by empowerment within the context of four countries, Thailand, India, Chile and Kenya; second, a discussion on urban poor areas; third case studies, which includes interventions by NGOs and general research in communities to gauge empowerment in Thailand, India, Chile and Kenya; and finally a summary of the section, which outlines the knowledge gap in the current literature. However, it is important to note that the knowledge gap of the literature shall be discussed throughout, in addition to being summarized.

2.2 Empowerment

Empowerment is important for development as it allows helps to determine the extent to which women can gain education, seek healthcare and contraceptive, have freedom to determine child-bearing etc, (Oppenheim & Mason, 2003: 4). Women are the most marginalized sect of the population in every single country in the world. Even Iceland, which boasts the highest levels of equality between men and women, still has not attained perfect equality, (Sreenivas, 2006: Introduction).

Empowerment is difficult to define as it is a multi-dimensional process, however several definitions have been accepted to define empowerment, including “It encapsulates a women’s ability to take charge of things in general and their own lives in particular;” is “The expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them;” and “Women’s empowerment involves gaining a voice, having mobility, and establishing a public presence,” (Malhotra,

2000: 3; Basu & Koolwal, 2005: 18; and Johnson, 1994: 148). A key finding during research was the following chart, which looks at empowerment through various dimensions, spaces and indicators:

Table 1 Empowerment: Spaces, Dimensions and Indicators

Space			
Dimension	Household	Community	Broader Areas
Economic	Women's control over income; relative contribution to family support; access to and control of resources	Women's access to employment; ownership of assets and land; access to credit; involvement in local trade association; access to markets	Women's representation in high-paying jobs; women CEO's' representation of women's economic interests in macro-economic policies,; state and federal budgets
Socio-Cultural	Women's freedom of movement; lack of discrimination against daughters; commitment to education daughters	Women's visibility and access to social spaces; access to modern transportation; participation in extra-familial norms social networks; shift in patriarchal norms (such as son preference);	Women's literacy and access to a range of educational options; positive media images of women

		representation of the female in myth and ritual	
Familial/Inter personal	Participation in domestic decision-making; control over sexual relations; ability to make childbearing decisions, use contraception, obtain abortion; control over spouse selection and marriage timing; freedom from violence	Shifts in marriage and kinship systems indicating greater value and autonomy for women (e.g. later marriages, self selection of spouses, reduction in the practice of dowry; acceptability of divorce); local campaigns against domestic violence	Regional/national trends in timing of marriage, options for divorce; political, legal, religious support for (or lack of active opposition to) such shifts; systems providing easy access to contraception, safe abortion, reproductive health services
Legal	Knowledge of legal rights; domestic support for exercising rights	Community mobilization for rights; campaigns for rights awareness; effective local enforcement of legal rights	Laws supporting women's rights, access to resources and options; Advocacy for rights and legislation; use of judicial system to redress rights violations
Political	Knowledge of political system and means of access to it; domestic	Women's involvement or mobilization in the	Women's representation in regional and national

	support for political engagement; exercising right to vote	local political system/campaigns; support for specific candidates or legislation; representation in local government	government; strength as a voting bloc; representation of women's interests in effective lobbies and interest groups
Psychological	Self-esteem; self-efficacy psychological well-being	Collective awareness of injustice and potential of mobilization	Women's sense of inclusion and entitlement; systemic acceptance of women's entitlement and inclusion

(Adapted from: Malhotra, 2003: 5)

The preceding chart has helped to construct the questionnaire, which was delivered to women in the urban poor area of Khlong Toei, who are using the services of Duang Prateep. The main priority of this research is to discover the impact DPF has on women's empowerment. Although there are many academic definitions for empowerment, it is a main priority of the thesis to determine how women in urban poor areas define empowerment.

The literature also helped to clarify several factors, which are important for empowerment, including availability of support systems for women; availability of women specific data and feminist leadership, (Medel-Anoneuvo, 1995: 9). Moreover, the literature discusses the three steps in empowerment, which are resources, agency and achievements, (Matthews; Brookes; Stones, & Hossain, 2005: 3). Sen (1985) states that

resources and agency together constitute capabilities, which is the potential that people have for living the lives that they want.

2.2.1 Empowerment in Thailand

An interesting finding from the literature was the position of women in Thailand as compared to other countries in Asia. In a study conducted in fifty-four communities in Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines, it concluded that gender/family systems in Thailand contrasts with others countries in South Asia. While women are expected to obey their husbands, women are also required to play a role in the household economy by finding employment and managing household finances. Women in Thailand have more freedom of movement also, compared to women in other Asian countries, (Oppenheim & Mason, 2003: 7).

2.2.2 Empowerment India

Women's empowerment in India will be discussed within the context of economic liberalization, and globalization.

In recent years women have been able to access employment more, denoting that women's economic empowerment has risen. In the years following economic liberalization, women began to work in leadership development and began to emerge and contribute to the corporate world; engaged in business and professional fields; in non-profit organizations; and took part in higher education (such as attaining Bachelor, Masters and Doctorate degrees), (Ghadially, 2007: 26). Moreover, women entered almost all areas of business activities, including textiles, engineering goods, electronics, beauty parlours and fashion design, (Rao, 2006: 178). However, based on the research, the examples of women in high-paying positions in India are few and far between, which shows that women have indeed become more economically empowered at the household and community level, but lack economic empowerment in broader areas. Primary

examples of women in high-income jobs include Ritu Kumar, who is known as the Queen of Indian Textiles; Ritu Beri, who worked in the French Fashion Industry; Vinita Jain, the founder of global beauty line Biotique; and finally Shahnaz Hussian of Shanz Herbal, another global brand, (Bhavani, 2006: 175).

Moreover, more women from urban, middle class families are experiencing a lack of discrimination against their daughters, as well as more of commitment to educate them. Shabani, an Indian woman living in Bengal has a baby daughter. Her husband was pleased to have a daughter, and he believes that it is vital to educate his daughter as well as possible. However, a commitment to educating daughters is not nation-wide, which shows that while women are more socio-culturally empowered at the household level, they lack socio-cultural empowerment in the community, and in broader areas. Also, women in India are beginning to question cultural norms, as well as examine roots of their oppression and thus there has been an increased awareness and consciousness raising in India about patriarchy, however, there is still a patriarchal ordering of society.

Moreover, women are still being relegated to the private sphere and women's roles being based on compassion, affection, emotion and unreflective loyalties, (Oza, Introduction, 2006). Thus, the socio-economic empowerment women may feel may indeed just be a shallow form of empowerment. While there have been steps made in terms of women's empowerment in the socio-cultural area, there is still far to go to ensure that every Indian woman is empowered socio-culturally, rather than the majority being women from urban areas. Sahoo (2006) states that "Traditional exclusionary practices through caste, gender, tribe, religion and education are still alive and kicking, but in a modified form," (8). Women may now be more empowered, but not fully empowered. Moreover, they may still be victims of patriarchy, albeit a modernized form of patriarchy.

In India, there have been several ways in which women have experienced entitlement and inclusion. First, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendment guaranteed

1/3 reservation for women in local bodies, (Ghadially, 2007: 24). Also, The Women's Rights Initiative (an Indian NGO) has prepared the Draft of the Domestic Violence Against Women Bill in 1991, which has helped to expand the definition of domestic violence and includes honour killings, sexual harassment in the workplace, and national and transnational trafficking. Moreover, The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Bill, 2005, has extended legal protection to wives of abusers, sister, widows, mothers, etc. Moreover, it safeguards the rights of women to secure housing in their matrimonial homes even if they do not have a title to the house, (Ghadially, 2007: 15-24). Thus, some women in India are involved in political life, showing that they are indeed politically empowered in community and broader areas. However, while women may be entitled, there are not legitimate ways to ensure that the amendments and Bills are indeed followed through with. It is much more difficult in rural areas there may be no enforcement of such laws, or ways to discuss cases with police. Next, empowerment in Chile will be discussed.

2.2.3 Empowerment in Chile

Women's empowerment in Chile will be discussed within the context of post-authoritarian rule. Many social groups opposed the authoritarian rule, enormous human rights violations and plummeting living standards experienced during Pinochet's two-decade regime, including women's rights groups, (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002: 443). Women's rights movements began to emerge in Chile under Pinochet's authoritarian rule during the 1970s and 1980s, (Franceschet, 2003: 15). The women's movement served as an integral part of the struggle for democracy in Chile, (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002: 444). Women's groups really formed the bulk of the leadership in community organizations, despite the patriarchal ideologies Pinochet articulated throughout the "fatherland" of Chile. Women led organizations focused on economic survival, set-up *ollas communes*, which are community kitchens, and also set-up production and consumption co-operatives, (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002: 444). Women from all different areas and class positions began to mobilize and

organized during a period of gross repression. Class status or geographic area was no longer a factor in inhibiting women's participation.

After the plebiscite in 1988, which successfully ended military rule in Chile, elites within the women's movement formed the 'Women's Alliance For Democracy' (Concertacion de Mujeres por la Democracia), (Matear, 1997: 98). The movement served as a catalyst for further successes of the women's movement and can be seen as the starting point towards helping to empower women and improving female equality. When compared with other women's movements in Latin America Chile has had "...one of the strongest and most successful, (Franceschet, 2001: 208). Thus, women in Chile are quite empowered in the political dimension of empowerment. They took it upon themselves to fight for their rights.

2.2.4 Empowerment in Kenya

Traditional cultural norms in Kenya tend to be based on a system of patriarchy, (Sifuna, 2006: 84). Many of those traditional patriarchal norms were strengthened during the colonial period and it has consequently led to gender socialization. During colonization African elders and colonial authorities shared the same position on the inferior status of women in society. That agreement led to the intensification of the subordination of females in Kenyan society as the colonialist exerted their power and influence over Kenyan elders and that trend continues to this day. The Christian missionaries who pioneered Kenyan education were middle-class men who believed women should be wives, mothers and homoe-workers, (Buchmann, 1999: 102). Moreover, gender, not skill, was an important determinant of who would receive education and thus during the last decades of colonialism only a very small proportion of girls attended primary and secondary school. A woman's role in society was directly related to the creation of life and it was not to receive an education, (Sifuna, 2006: 88). The very establishment of universities in Africa during the colonial period was a part of a masculine scheme, "...dedicated to the production of colonial subjects to inherit the

exclusive masculine mantle of colonial leadership and further the existing imperial interest,” (Sifuna, 2006: 86). These trends continue to this day and are existent in contemporary secondary schools and in households all over Kenya, which encourages boys in school and discourages girls.

Through personal discussions with various individuals, including professors, government officials, students, etc., while in Kenya, the researcher discovered that women lack empowerment in several factions of life. Parliament is made up almost of all males; women are meant to obey their husbands; preference is given to male children; women are often abused; women lack a political voice, and the list continues. Kenneth, a subsistence coffee farmer, believes that boys and girls have very distinct gender roles that are dictated by culture and need to be observed. He states that educated women must stick to gender roles and if they are too bigheaded you should get rid of them.¹ This comment really exemplifies the traditional cultural norms, which are widespread in Kenya. They include domestic responsibilities, such as household chores and child bearing.

Moreover, women may lack empowerment in several dimensions as they often have double or even triple roles, and their workdays are far longer than a man's. Professor Elishba Kimani, from Kenyatta University in Nairobi described Kenyan rural women as ‘beasts of burdens’.² Therefore, time is precious for women and they are less likely to have any free time to engage in politics, as an example, (Huyer & Mitter, 2001: 19). Thus, it is blatantly clear that women in Kenya lack empowerment in various dimensions, which has much to do with gender socialization and the personification of traditional gender roles. Bangkok urban poor areas will now be discussed.

2.3 Bangkok Urban Poor Areas

¹ Kenneth. Personal Interview. May 13th, 2008

² Elishba Kimani. Personal Interview. May 14th, 2008.

The UNHSP report on ‘The Challenges of Slums’ has helped to outline the basic characteristics of urban poor areas, as well as offer a definition. The definitions can be found in Chapter 1: Introduction of this proposal. Pornchokchai (2003) elaborates on the physical aspects of Bangkok urban poor areas. The population is 19% of the total slum population of Bangkok; there are 1,099,575 squatters and they live in 796 communities, (6). While literature on urban poor areas in Bangkok do discuss the physical attributes of slums, they fail to discuss the relations of women and men, or the role and status of women in urban poor areas. Pornchokchai does mention briefly that women are less privileged than men, but the situation has improved over the past decade, (28-29). However, this is the only reference to the differences between men and women in the study.

2.4 Case Studies

Several case studies have shown that organizations have been successful in empowering women in urban poor areas. Through an analysis of several organizations working to empower women, Ullah (2003) found that they could positively contribute to women’s empowerment, (21). The case studies will now be discussed within Thailand, India, Chile and Kenya.

2.4.1 NGOs Empowering Women in Thailand

Senarak, Chirawatkul & Markovic (2006) conducted research in an Isan community in Northeast Thailand. This research sought to empower women to create changes, individually and collectively that would allow them to maintain their health. It was done so through participatory action research. Doing participatory action research should allow women to empower themselves and could create a model to promote health. Although it wasn’t facilitated through an organization it shows that projects are able to encourage empowerment in Thailand.

In Thailand, since the 1980s, there have been many examples of communities, civic/NGOs movements as well as partnership between government agencies and community-based organizations in order to upgrade urban poor areas, (Boonyabantha, 2005: 4). However, this study fails to discuss the role of men and women separately, as they are lumped together in the research.

In Thailand, there are several NGOs, which work to empower women. Although already stated in Chapter I: Introduction, the NGOs include Women's Education for Advancement and Empowerment (WEAVE), which teaches indigenous women to become socially, economically and politically empowered;³ Goodwill Group Foundation, which assists disadvantaged in several different ways, including English Training, Computer Training, Vocational Training and Micro-lending;⁴ and EMPOWER Foundation, which supports women in the sex industry;⁵ and Sikka Asia Foundation which has a craft project in Khlong Toei to improve women's status, increase incomes and raise consciousness.⁶ However, no scholarly research was found to determine the impact that such projects have on women's empowerment.

Jongpiputvanich; Veeravongs & Wonsekiarttirat, (1998), conducted a study in the Bangkok Urban Poor Area of Khlong Toei to prevent diarrhea, by encouraging mothers to improve their hygiene techniques. 606 women began the study but only 221 finished, (221). The results were disappointing due to poor commitment from community. Thus, it is important to assess culture, organization, family problems, physical environment and population migration before implementing a study. Pornchokchai (2003) discusses how case studies of NGOS working in Urban Poor Areas over the past twenty years must be assessed clearly to pave way for better services for them. Surveys should be conducted to track the changes in the lives of those living in urban poor areas in terms of their social status, political achievements, and psychological changes over time.

³ <http://www.weave-women.org/>

⁴ <http://goodwillbangkok.org/ourPrograms.asp>

⁵ http://www.empowerfoundation.org/index_en.html

⁶ www.gispri.or.jp/english/newsletter/cpdf/SAF-project.pdf

In terms of women working to secure the rights of women in urban poor areas, a prime example is Prateep Ungsongtham, the founder of DPF. When her neighbours were confronted with eviction, she took to the media, landowners and government to speak on behalf of the urban poor. DPF continues to fight for women and men facing eviction, and helps to secure housing rights in Khlong Toei.⁷

2.4.2 NGOs Empowering Women in India

Sato looked at the process of women's empowerment through community-based activities. It examines women's participation in a local government and NGO collaborated slum improvement scheme in Ahmedabad, India. She found that NGOs play a role in mobilizing those who have been denied access to decision-making and choices. Moreover, they are vital for social transformation amongst poor women, but are increasingly vulnerable in their ideologies when it comes to activities at the local community level, (10). Hill (2001) also found that women have become empowered through taking part in organizational-level activities.

The Association for Community Development (ACD) works together with the government in Indian Slums. It seeks to do the following, promote human rights for the grassroots woman, and promote women's participation. It does so through workshops, seminars, awareness building, rallies, staff development, building networks and alliances. ACD was developed as a new approach to development and women's issues. Research concluded that women's participation increased in family decision-making and social activities; women voters cast their votes in elections; women were encouraged to participate in elections, meeting and rallies and gender sensitivity increased, (Islam & Sultana, 2005: 24-37).

Nachiappan & Rajan (2008) discuss how the Working Women's Forum has helped to facilitate women's social and economic empowerment. It currently has more

⁷ <http://en.dpf.or.th/node/22>

than 70,000 members. WWF provides women with low interest loans, which the authors have found have been effective in acting as an instrument in of social change and providing women with better choice of their livelihood. There are several different jobs women have engaged in including vegetable vendor, rice trader, shop owner, silk trader, tailor, toy maker, fish vendor, etc. Ms. Shanthi, an owner of a welding shop who has used WWFs' services, said that the loan has led to positive changes in her life and her confidence has grown. She says she now lives a happy life. The researchers found that WWF could serve as an example for other NGOs, and the results could be replicable with dedicated leadership from the NGO, (29-41).

Ms. K. Rani, took part in a micro-finance scheme with Working Women's Forum in India. She has owned a sugarcane juice shop since she became a member of WWF. She was provided with a loan of Rs. (Indian rupees) 10,000 from WWF to start her business. The profits from her business have allowed her to build her own home, and rent it out to others. She now is in a good financial position, and even provides employment to needy people, and also has control over her life, (Nachippan & Rajan, 2008: 29-41).

2.4.3 NGOs Empowering Women in Chile

Following the fall of the Pinochet regime and the subsequent democratization of Chile, the women's NGOs were extremely successful at garnering rights for women and improving their equality. A women's rights group called the National Women's Service, or SERNAM as it is commonly known. SERNAM is an organization designed to protect and promote women's equality in Chile and serves as, "...the body responsible for working with the Executive to devise and propose general plans and measures designed to ensure that women enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men," (Franceschet, 2003: 18-19). SERNAM has played a key role in empowering Chilean women from all class backgrounds and from the urban to the rural. A faction of SERNAM called CSF

(Civil Society Fund) has been instrumental in providing resources for many needy grassroots women's organizations, which has helped to empower them.

In terms of functions, SERNAM has many. For instance it formulates legal reforms, retrains public servants, "...in a gendered perspective on public policy..." designs new social policies, augments the participation of women in society and in politics, conducts valuable research which is focused on expressing true statistics on women's situations, and also encourages equal opportunities for women at the local level, (Franceschet, 2003: 19). In addition SERNAM also aims to improve the conditions of women in society in a few ways by improving access to, "...employment, housing, education and credit," (Matear, 1997: 98). In terms of long-term objectives SERNAM seeks to address more long-term gender inequalities in society by, "...eliminating institutional forms of discrimination, alleviating women's responsibility for the home and childcare, and ending the sexual division of labour," (Matear, 1997: 98).

It is clear that SERNAM does not leave any issues in the dust and aims to do as much as possible in order to assure women's rights are acknowledged and women are also empowered. By designing new policies, which will hopefully become legislation, women can feel more fully and adequately represented within society. Moreover, because SERNAM does engage in much research about the current conditions of women, those figures found will allow major decision makers to understand the position of women and act appropriately to ensure legislation is in place to better society for women.

SERNAM has played a key role in promoting specific rights for both rural and urban women. In 1991 SERNAM and the Heritage Ministry signed an agreement, which aimed to improve women's roles in rural development, by giving them ownership of land and property, (Matear, 1997: 99). This was an important factor in empowering rural women. Giving women access to land and assets allows them to have control over their lives and gives them a sense of responsibility. Women no longer have to rely on their male counterparts to help them control their land; they are able to do so by themselves.

Also, SERNAM helped to reform a Labour Code, which allows for safer and more hygienic working conditions for female seasonal fruit workers in rural areas. Women are now protected from sexual harassment, have separate bathrooms as well as living quarters, (Matear, 1997: 99). This was a vital step in ensuring that rural women's rights are realized as extremely important. It is also important to note that rural women can begin to feel more protected by society with the change of the Labour Code, which can improve their trust for society.

Also, SERNAM proposed a bill, which changed the legal capacity of married women in both urban and rural areas. The bill would allow married women the ability to access credit without their husband's permission, (Matear, 1997: 99). Prior to the bill, women could not access credit on their own. Allowing women to access credit is a phenomenal way to allow women to become more empowered. Being able to rely on themselves, as opposed to their husbands, is extremely empowering. Chilean women were now seen as not an extension of a husband, but as an individual capable of making important decisions for themselves. The CSF (Civil Society Fund) continues to engage in meaningful actions to help further the equal rights of women in Chile.

2.4.4 NGOs Empowering Women in Kenya

Women's Voices is a part of the International Women's Information and Communications Technology Projects, which works in Kenya, Zimbabwe and Peru. It works with poor urban women to support and improve their communication skills. The project came out of the assumption that women's voices, "...rarely contribute to the current discourses on poverty."⁸ Women lack participation in policies about poverty for several reasons including illiteracy, a lack of confidence and a lack of mobility. In order to gauge women's opinions on current policies, ICTs were employed. This project has won acclaim all over the world, and has even won the Bethino Award for Technology and Social Justice. Stakeholders of the project trained women how to script and shoot

⁸ http://www.practicalaction.org/?id=womens_voices2

short videos about their personal experiences. Many aspects of their communities were discussed in the videos, such as HIV/AIDS, the number of orphans in their communities and the health problems both they and their community face. Also, the women discussed their personal dreams and their aspirations. Videos were shown on national TV and allowed women to see that they can spur development in their own communities.

Upon analysis of the project, it can be seen that empowerment was the most important output. Women were now able to express their development concerns to large audiences and also help to influence development policies at national levels. Policy makers now have first-hand knowledge about the situations in local communities, which would have not been possible without the videos. At the launch of the videos, a national cabinet minister said he would conduct an official report about the details on the women's experiences.⁹

2.5 Summary of Literature Review

From the literature two key gaps were found. First, there is a lack of information on the status of women in Bangkok Urban Poor Areas. Second, the researcher was not able to find many case studies of organizations working in Urban Poor Areas, to empower women, as studies may be in the Thai language.

Empowerment is very different in each of the countries discussed. As will be seen in the interviews later on, the women interviewed do not engage in political life, in terms of garnering rights, etc. The women do vote, but political involvement stops there. However, in Thailand, a prime example of a women fighting for housing rights and against eviction, is Prateep Ungsongtham, the founder of DPF. DPF continues to work towards securing rights of those dwelling in urban poor areas. In Kenya, women tend to lack a voice, when it comes to fighting for their rights, however, this may be a result of embedded gender roles. However, in Chile and India, women are quite empowered in the

⁹ http://www.practicalaction.org/?id=womens_voices2

political dimension. The women there have been instrumental in garnering rights for women all over the country. Although, it is important to note, that in Chile, while women have taken roles as social reformers, they have not been politicians, of government officials and women only fill 17 percent of parliamentary seats worldwide and 14 percent of ministerial-level positions.¹⁰ Moreover, in India, women still lack representation on Indian politics, and women tend to only be more empowered in a psychological, economic and socio-cultural sense. Also, in Kenya, the women were able to have their voices heard about issues facing them, and an official report was conducted to look into their issues. However, it is unclear if the report will lead to policy change. Political empowerment will be further discussed and analyzed in the final chapter of this thesis, and related to the seven women interviewed for this study.

¹⁰ <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/62617/swanee-hunt/let-women-rule>

CHAPTER III

PROFILE OF STUDY AREA AND WOMEN INTERVIEWED

3.1 Introduction

This section will first outline Thailand in general; second, discuss Khlong Toei Urban Poor Area; third, provide an overview of Duang Prateep Foundation, and outline several of its activities; and finally provide a ‘life-story’ of each of the women interviewed.

3.2 Thailand

The Thai kingdom was established in the mid-14th century, and was known as Siam, until 1939. Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia, which has never been under colonial control. The current population is 65,905,410. An overwhelming majority of Thais are Buddhists, standing at 94.6%. Other religions include Muslim, 4.6%; Christian, 0.7%; and other, 0.1%. GDP per capita is \$8,400. 1.4% of the population is unemployed, which is quite low. The percentage of the population below the poverty line is 10%.¹

In terms of urban poor areas, Bangkok has the largest concentration of urban poor areas, followed by Pattaya and Chiang Mai, who are experiencing growing slum populations. 10% of the population in Thailand lives in Bangkok, and 20% of them live in slums. Many poor migrants from countryside, tend to migrate to Bangkok and other large towns for work. Slum dwellers are occupying the land illegally, but settle there because it is an affordable place to live. Khlong Toei urban poor area will now be discussed.²

¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html>

² from <http://en.dpf.or.th/node/22>.

3.3 Khlong Toei Urban Poor Area

Khlong Toei urban poor area (also known as Khlong Toei Slum) is located in Central Bangkok. It is the largest urban poor area in Bangkok and also has the lowest socioeconomic development indicators in Bangkok. The area is comprised of eighteen communities and is spread over 800 rai (320 acres). The population is estimated at 80,000 and is divided into about 7,000 homes. People in the area live in the following conditions: poverty, overcrowding, poor housing, homes with non-durable materials, poor clean water supply, etc, (Jongpiputvanich et al, 1998: 188).

Khlong Toei has several NGOs working within it including Sikka Asia Foundation; Mercy Centre; The Human Development Foundation/Centre; The Girl's Home; SKIP: The Slum Kindergarten Improvement Program and DPF, which is the case study for this research. DPF will now be discussed.

3.4 Duang Prateep Foundation (DPF)

DPF was established by Prateep Ungsongtham. Despite spending only four years in primary school she knew the importance of education. At the age of twelve she began to save money by working as a vendor as a way to pay for secondary school, which she attended at night. She studied education in college at Suan Dusit, the foremost teacher training college. After discovering that there were no schools in her urban poor area of Khlong Toei, she started one in her own home in 1968, while still continuing her studies. When the school was threatened with eviction, her neighbours asked her to present the case to the landowner, government and media, despite her young age of twenty. She later earned the Magsaysay and Rockefeller Awards, which allowed her to develop DPF, as well as gain the trust and respect of the urban poor and the Government.

DPF has a commitment to empowering women. Most recently, a new English and computer instruction was launched, as a means to improve career options for women. Several of its activities and programs are committed to empowering women, including Credit Union, Community Development, etc.³ All will be discussed soon.

DPF was selected for many reasons. First, DPF is a very well-known and successful NGO in Thailand; second, Prateep Ungsongtham is a popular figure in Thailand, and is also an empowered woman; third, DPF has a long history of working in Khlong Toei, and engages in activities to empower women; and finally, it has a diverse list of programs and activities, all of which will now be discussed.

3.4.1 Education Sponsorship

Although compulsory education is free in Thailand, school items such as books, uniforms, school supplies, etc., are too expensive for many people in urban poor areas to afford. DPF offers sponsorships, through sponsors either in Thailand or abroad, to slum children. After they receive the scholarship, children are encouraged to stay in school for as long as possible. Children who most need of financial support are selected, after an analysis by Sponsorship Section workers. Sponsors receive a school and financial report every year, as well as a letter. The education sponsorship Program is currently aiding 2,300 Urban Poor Children, (Duang Prateep Foundation, 2009).⁴

3.4.2 Kindergartens

Initially, Kindergartens with DPF began as a refuge from urban poor areas for young children, while their parents were looking for work. It was quickly seen that a kindergarten could make a big difference in family lives. DPF now supervises eight kindergartens in Bangkok Urban Poor Areas. The Kindergartens serve as a stimulating

³ <http://en.dpf.or.th/node/22>.

⁴ Ibid

process for young children. Also, the children who attend the Kindergarten are given regular health and dental inspection, and parents are taught how to raise healthy children.⁵

3.4.3 Community Development

Through the cooperation of the Ministry of Interior, DPF is able to help those who live in urban poor areas effectively register as to obtain an Identity Card, so they can find jobs. DPF also allows people who have been threatened with eviction by obtaining compensation for evicted families, as well as contacts funding agencies to provide loans in order to buy building supplies.

DPF also uses its expertise and contacts to help build facilities for child and community development. Recently, DPF has used computer training to empower small-scale entrepreneurs in Khlong Toei. Also, DPF works closely with urban poor youth groups and helps to coordinate many events, such as sports events and cultural festivities and camps. In addition DPF runs a community radio station for youth; help disabled urban poor register with Public Welfare; and holds many seminars, training sessions and workshops for local people to empower them and develop contacts.⁶

3.4.4 Credit Union

The Credit Union section of Khlong Toei began in 1994, and was developed as a means to empower the urban poor. The Credit Union was especially needed as the urban poor cannot obtain loans from commercial banks. Membership currently stands at over 1,100 people. It allows members to manage their financial affairs. New members must attend a training session to better understand the Credit Union. Members can borrow up to 3,000 baht in order to cover emergencies and up to 100,000 baht to start up a business

⁵ from <http://en.dpf.or.th/node/22>.

⁶ Ibid

or pay for home improvements. Rates of interests are far lower than traditional loan sharks, and members are only required to pay back at least 100 baht per day.⁷

3.4.5 Seniors

Although DPF works primarily with children's education, it often provides assistance to the elderly. DPF helps the elderly deal with medical concerns, bureaucracy, and any other problems, which may arise. Moreover, DPF also has a social club for seniors, which meets every Wednesday for lunch, crafts, social activities, and massages and haircuts. DPF has also convinced local hospitals to perform cataract operations at discounted fees.⁸

3.4.6 Special Education for the Hearing Impaired

During a survey in the 1980s it was discovered that hearing impairment was the most common handicap in Khlong Toei urban poor area. Moreover, most children who were hearing impaired were not in school, as specialized schools are very expensive. Thus, in response to this issue, DPF opened up a school for children with hearing impairments in 1986. Children are given specific hearing aids, which they can keep for the rest of their lives. In school children learn healthy habits, social skills, reading, writing, drawing and painting. Parents of hearing-impaired children are highly involved in their growth and development and are encouraged to practice communication with their children.

In 2003 DPF opened a 'sound-lab' where children can practice their speaking skills with a computer. Computers record the progress of children. The 'sound-lab' has

⁷ from <http://en.dpf.or.th/node/22>.

⁸ Ibid

also be designed to benefit other people in the community who are hearing-impaired and do not attend hearing impairment school.⁹

3.4.7 New Life Projects

As a response to the trend of ‘broken’ families, DPF initiated New Life Projects for children who are at risk for drugs, exploitation, abuse and crime. After consultation with families, guardians, or police, the children involved with the New Life Project are taken away from the urban poor area to Chumphon. About one hundred boys live and work on a farm in Chumphon and learn to cooperate, and take pride in their work. The project usually lasts about three years. Most boys attend local schools, but some also engage in vocational training or agricultural work. It is hoped that when the boys return from the project they will be able to face their problems with more courage and be able to make better decisions.

The New Life Project for boys proved to be so successful, that a New Life Project for girls was opened in Kachanaburi Province. Most girls who attend have experienced some form of abuse or exploitation, such as sexual abuse, become exploited labour, or have become addicted to drugs.¹⁰

3.4.8 Art

Art is used as a means to develop children’s creativity. The Children’s Art Programme works as a drop-in centre where children can meet with DPF’s art teacher every day when school finishes. Sometimes children go on art camps to areas outside of Bangkok. The Art Program seeks to instill a sense of achievement in children who may have never experienced it before.¹¹

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ from <http://en.dpf.or.th/node/22>.

¹¹ Ibid

3.4.9 Puppets

DPF has a mobile puppet troupe called Nithan Caravan. The shows are meant to combine education and entertainment, and encourage an interest in books; teach children about Thai culture; make them more environmentally aware; and discuss good morals. The puppet show has also taught puppet skills to hill-tribe children; former addicts, children who have HIV; and male prisoners.¹²

3.4.10 Fire and Emergencies

Due to the frequency of fires in Khlong Toei, DPF persuaded the Toyonaka in Japan to donate four fire engines. The fire trucks are run twenty-four hours a day by volunteers. Also, fire-fighter training is offered to community members.¹³

3.4.11 Tsunami Relief and Development

Following the tsunami in 2004 volunteer fire-fighters went to Phang Nga Province to aid in relief. Also a social worker was deployed to aid with the psychological aftermath of the event. Youth from the New Life Project also went to lend their services.

By the end of January 2005 DPF set up Activity Centers in Baan Nam Khem and Phru Teaw communities in Phang Nga Provinces. The centres offered activities such as mother/child care; art activities; libraries; computer activities; etc. In response to the economic depression due to an absence of tourists, DPF began to offer start-up capital for income-generating activities. Educational sponsorship was provided for four hundred children affected by the tsunami. The Nithan Caravan conducted a two-year program and visited two hundred and sixty schools in six tsunami-affected areas.

¹² from <http://en.dpf.or.th/node/22>.

¹³ Ibid

In 2006 the Baan Tharn Namchai orphanage was orphaned in Phra Teaw village, and how houses over fifty children. In 2006 the Baan Tharn Namchai orphanage was not able to house all of the orphans, so the Hands Across the Water was built beside it to provide more living space. DPF continues to work in whatever way is needed to ensure the long-term development of the region and persons affected by the Tsunami.¹⁴

3.5 Profiles of Women Interviewed

The profiles of the women interviewed will now be discussed. The questions from the questionnaires are answered in this section and serve to provide a ‘story’ of each woman’s life. Pseudonyms were used to protect the women’s privacy.

3.5.1 “Sangwean”

Sangwean is fifty-one years old, was married when she was eighteen and has two children, an elder son and a younger daughter, and five grandchildren. Her and her husband are legally married. They had a small ceremony, and now share the same last name. She has no education. She was born and raised in Bangkok. Sangwean sells noodles and her income depends entirely on how many noodle she sells per day. She estimates her daily income to be about 200-300 baht per day and works Monday to Friday. Her husband is retired and he earns 50% of his original salary as a security guard at Khlong Teoi pier, which is about 7600 baht per month. Her son has no regular salary, and he sometimes carries objects from boats at the pier and earns about 200-300 baht per month. Her hobbies and past-times include cleaning and cooking.

Both of Sangwean’s parents are from Bangkok. Neither of them have ever had a regular income. Her mother washed clothes and her father transported rice sacks to

¹⁴ from <http://en.dpf.or.th/node/22>.

warehouses. Of her five siblings, she is the oldest and only herself and her youngest sibling are still alive.

She has been involved with the Credit Union section of DPF for one year. She registered as a user so she could receive loans to run her noodle stand. Her noodle stand was originally owned by relatives, and they allowed her to take it over. She usually borrows about 3000 baht per transaction, and the transaction usually lasts about three months. She does not take part in Credit Union meetings, but she plans to in the future and she would like to be more informed. Her spouse supports her participation, and he thinks it is a good idea that she can borrow money.

Sangwean has access to family assets, but she does not have ownership, as her house and car are under her husband's name. In her home she has a fridge, washing machine and television. Sangwean has control over her income and she and her husband share their income. Her income usually goes towards unforeseen needs, like car repairs and miscellaneous expenses, such as buying cigarettes for her son. Her husband pays regular bills and rents the shop for Sangwean. Her grandchildren go to school for free, and she lets them eat her noodles for lunch.

Sangwean believes that both boys and girls deserve a chance to receive education. She has access to social spaces in the community, but she has an ankle injury, which makes it difficult to join. She said that there is Arabic dancing in the community everyday, but she unfortunately cannot join.

Sangwean feels like she has control over decision-making in the home, but would consult her husband on issues, such as debt, however he generally lets her do what she wants. She said that if he needed his car fixed he might ask her to cover the cost. Sangwean and her husband both decide when it comes to sexual intercourse. She made the childbearing decisions, and only wanted two children. She is knowledgeable about contraception, but did not use it for her first child. Her husband said he had a vasectomy,

but he lied and actually did not. They had their first child five years after they had been together. She was then on birth control for ten years, and then had her second child. She had great difficulty giving birth to both of her children. Her son had to be pulled out with instruments, and her daughter was born unconscious but was revived and now suffers from high blood pressure and is overweight. She now uses contraception.

Her husband has never abused Sangwean physically, or verbally. She said that whoever is at fault would generally keep quiet. Her husband does not consume alcohol and does not gamble. She used to drink at social events, but does not now, and she does not gamble. In the past, Sangwean attempted to obtain a divorce from her husband because he had mistresses. However, family members encouraged them to stay together and thus she did not pursue a divorce. She took care of her children when they were younger.

Sangwean is not knowledgeable about her legal rights. She follows some political news but has no knowledge of the system. She always votes, unless she is in the countryside.

Sangwean feels as though she has moderate self-esteem. She often has to encourage herself to complete tasks. She believes that self-esteem comes from both inside and outside. She thinks that if people are faced with failure in their life they may have low self-esteem.

Sangwean woman views empowerment as having confidence in order to achieve things in life. She feels empowered and does not like to feel dependant on others. She stated that she would do everything by herself if she could. Since she has joined DPF she feels much more empowered, as now she is debt-free and financially stable. Her husband

is happy with her involvement in the organization. Her relationship has not changed with the community, and she feels empowered at both home and in the community.¹⁵

3.5.2 “Piya”

Piya is twenty-seven years old. She was married when she was seventeen and is still legally married to her husband, but has a new partner. She attended school until grade nine. She has two children, who are both girls aged six and eight. She was born in Pichit Province. She works as a food vendor for her father’s business and earns about 200 baht per day and works six days a week. Her partner makes about 6000 baht per month. He checks items at the pier before they go on boats. Her hobbies include cleaning, cooking and watching TV.

Piya moved here with her family when she was fourteen years old in order to complete grade nine. She met her husband when she moved to Bangkok and she moved with him to Sakeaw Province. Her youngest daughter had Down’s Syndrome and she attends DPF’s special education program. She moved back to Bangkok again when she was seventeen and returned again three years ago, after she separated from her husband. She now lives with her new boyfriend, who is also her cousin.

Piya has lived in Khlong Toei for a total of eight years. Her parents are separated, and her father is dating the older sister of her mother. Both her parents now live in Bangkok. Her mother also has a new boyfriend. She is the oldest child, and she has a younger sister who is a nurse. Piya left her husband, because he was very abusive to her, especially when he was drunk. She is still not legally divorced, as she is scared that her husband may gain custody of her children.

¹⁵ Sangwean. Personal Interview. July 16th, 2009.

Piya has been involved with Duang Prateep for three years. She became involved by sending her child, who has Down's syndrome, to attend the special education program. She attends parent/teacher meetings. Her new partner encourages her to send her daughter there.

She has some access to family assets. Her husband owns the home they used to share in his province. She now rents a home in Khlong Toei with her new partner. She helped to pay for some of the assets in her home, including a TV, DVD player and fridge. She has control over her income and Piya and her partner share their income. She usually pays for daily expenses, and her partner usually pays for regular expenses, such as rent and bills. Her partner and her both pay for the education of her daughter who has Down's syndrome, which costs about 2600 baht per semester.

She is committed to educating both boys and girls, but she only has girls. She has access to social spaces in the community, but she is not involved in any.

Piya makes most decisions in the home. Both her and her partner make decisions about sexual intercourse. If she is tired he will not push her to have sex. With her husband he would often come home drunk and want to have sex. So she would say she would have to go to the bathroom and wait until he fell asleep. She now uses contraception, but did not use it for her first child. With her second child she was on birth control, but she still conceived. She does not experience violence with her partner, however, with her husband she experienced verbal abuse when he was sober and physical abuse when he was drunk. Once when he was drunk he cut her with a piece of glass on finger and damaged a nerve, which makes it difficult to pick things up with her hand. Her partner does not drink or gamble, but her husband did. While it is acceptable for her to obtain a divorce, but she will not pursue one because her husband may gain custody of their daughters. Both her and her partner take care of the children.

She is knowledgeable about her legal rights, and she knew it was wrong for her husband to beat her. She is still legally married to her husband. She follows political news but she does not have good knowledge of the political system; however, she votes in every election.

Piya feels like she has moderate self-esteem. An injury on her hand, inflicted by her husband while he was drunk, has made it difficult for her to pick things up and has damaged her self-esteem. She believes that her children contribute to her self-esteem and she lives for her children.

Piya feels that the term empowerment is very important. She feels that it means being able to make decisions by herself. She feels more empowered since she became involved with DPF. She is now able to build networks with other parents of children with disabilities and she feels much more confident. She likes that DPF offers many activities for networking. Her husband would not allow her to attend school meetings before. Piya's involvement with DPF has no effect with her relationship with her partner. She feels that her involvement has strengthened her relationship with community members as she often has dinners with neighbours and takes her children to play with them. She also feels more empowered at home, especially since she has left her husband.¹⁶

3.5.3 “Pii”

Pii is forty-three years old, and was legally married at the age of eighteen and has three girls. She has a high school education. She was born very close to Victory Monument, in Bangkok. She is a teacher and earns about 9000 baht per month. Her husband works in a bank close to Sathorn, and earns 21000 baht per month. Her hobbies include bead making.

¹⁶ Piya. Personal Interview. July 9th, 2009.

Pii's husband is from a Northern Province. She has lived in many other communities in both the North and South, including Hat Yai and Chiang Rai. When she was looking for a school for her children to attend in Khlong Toei she found out that there was a teaching position available in the Children's Centre of The Church of Christ in Thailand. She obtained the position and now her children go to the school as well.

In addition to being involved with DPF, she is also involved with Mercy Centre and Sikka Aisa Foundation. She has been involved for fifteen years. She attends meetings, activities and rallies with DPF. Her spouse feels comfortable with her being involved.

Pii has access to family assets, and bought many of the family assets with her yearly bonus. There is a TV, fridge, and many other appliances in her home to help with daily life. Her control over her income depends on the situation. Pii and her husband always try to make financial decisions based on what is best for their children. She shares her income with her husband, but she generally makes big decisions. She describes herself as an ATM for her husband as she collects the money and does it out to her husband when he needs it. They both pay the bills and pay for their children's education.

Although she only has girls, she is committed to educating both boys and girls. Pii has access to social spaces in the community, but generally joins DPF's activities including advocacy against drugs, children's rights and voting.

Pii controls money distribution in the home. Both her and her husband have control over sexual intercourse. If her husband asks for sex and she wants to, she will say yes. She did not plan her pregnancies, but had her tubes tied after her last child was born. When she was first married she experienced some violence, but it does not happen anymore. They have adjusted, and if they get angry her husband will just leave. Her husband consumes alcohol regularly, usually beer, but does not gamble. She does not drink or gamble.

Pii is knowledgeable about her legal rights. She is quite knowledgeable about the political system and often joins with political rallies. She has never missed an election, and is actually in charge of an election booth in Khlong Toei. She checks ID cards and makes sure people are registered.

Pii feels that she has good self-esteem and believes it come from her experiences. She has gained self-esteem from being a community leader and. She enjoys sharing her experiences and giving speeches.

Pii views empowerment as trusting herself, having people comfortable around her, being able to help others and not pushing people with her power. Since joining DPF she feels more motivated. She has much more knowledge and understanding of current affairs, such as the political debate between red and yellow shirts. Her involvement has had not had any impact on her relationship with her husband, as he often joins with her. Her relationship with the community has not changed, but now she is able to offer information to community members. She feels empowered in both her community and home.¹⁷

3.5.4 “Dok”

Dok is forty-three years old. She is legally married and has one son. Her son is in his fourth year at Ratcahpa University, and is studying accounting. She attended school until grade six. She was born in Khlong Toei. She sells grilled pork, and earns about 3000 baht per month. Her husband earns about 8000 baht per month, working as a vendor at Khlong Toei Market. Her pastimes include attending Duang Prateep activities.

¹⁷ Pii. Personal Interview. July 16th, 2009.

Dok used to work as a housekeeper when she was younger to help her family. She would use her wages to buy food for the home. When her parents divorced she chose to live with her mother and help her out with the home. She had a desire to study, but unfortunately did not have enough money. She decided to go to the Government Office, which hands out ID cards and tried to obtain one so she could find more fruitful employment. Even though she was only fifteen, and the legal age to obtain a care is seventeen, she was able to convince the officer to give her one. She met her husband when she was nineteen and moved to this part of Khlong Toei with him. She has also lived in other provinces in the Northeast of Thailand.

Dok has been involved with DPF for three years, but she has known about the organization for many years, because her son received a scholarship when he was in grade one. Dok helps with DPF activities and events, and cooks for people when they join activities. She also joins seminars about children, scholarships, and sexual education. Her spouse is very comfortable with her being involved with the organization, but her husband cannot attend as he works often.

Dok has access to family assets, however her son bought most of them. In her home she has a fridge, TV, fan and computer. She does monthly payments on the computer. She bought it because it is very important for her son to use it for school. She has control over her income, and her and her husband share their income with each other. When school is not in session, she does not earn any money with her grilled pork stand, so her husband supplements her income during this period. Her and her husband both pay for bills. In terms of the payment of her son's education, he had a scholarship for primary school and she helps him whenever she can with his Bachelor degree. He also works during the week to pay for school.

Dok does not have any girls, but if she did she would be committed to educating both boys and girls. She has access to social spaces in the community. She joins other organization's activities, but she generally only attends DPF's activities.

Dok has primary decision-making in the home. Both her and her husband make mutual decisions when it comes to sexual intercourse. She controlled childbearing, and is on contraception. She had another child, but she gave it to her sister. She did not feel comfortable discussing the circumstances. When she and her husband were first married they fought verbally, but they have never fought physically. Dok's husband usually consumes alcohol regularly, but has not drunk in the last three months. He sometimes buys Lotto. She does drinks occasionally, but does not gamble. If she desired a divorce, she could pursue one. She primarily took care of her son when he was younger.

Dok has little knowledge about her legal rights. She understands the political system due to the media, and she always votes in every election.

Dok woman feels good about herself because she was able to take care of her mother and son. That has helped her to feel better about her abilities. She feels that being given the opportunity by DPF to given information in the community contributes to her self-esteem.

Dok views empowerment has having information and knowledge that she can share with the community. She feels empowered as a result of the knowledge she has acquired. She is now a contact for DPF's Scholarship Program and is able to share her experiences with community members. She feels that now she has more value in her community, which she did not have before she was involved. Her involvement has had no effect on her relationship with her husband. She states that her relationship with her community is much stronger. She feels empowered in both her community and home and her experiences have taught her how to be a good leader. She feels that her experiences with DPF have taught her to become a leader and has gained trust in her community.¹⁸

¹⁸ Dok. Personal Interview. July 3rd, 2009.

3.5.5 “Nok”

Nok is thirty years old, legally married at the age of twenty-two, with no children. She has a high school education. She sells rice soups, and earns 4000 baht per month. Her husband earns 21,000 baht per month. He is a manager at a Khlong Toei port company. He checks containers when they come in and organizes drivers. In her spare time she enjoys volunteering for healthy living activities.

Nok was born in Bangkok. After high school she looked for a job so she could support her brothers. She studied in a community school in Bangkok, and went to a different district in Bangkok for high school. She now lives with her husband and brother.

Nok works with the Young Mother’s Program with DPF, and has been involved for two years. She does several things for the Young Mother’s Program, including hosting a weekly radio show to discuss tips; obtains resources such as milk and clothes for newborns from other organizations; and visits new young mothers and gives them information on healthy living. Her spouse is ok with her involvement, and she often asks him for advice.

Nok has access to family assets, however her husband bought all of them. In her home there is a fridge, TC, fan, laptop, A/C, DVD and microwave. She has control over her income and her husband shares his income with her. Her husband usually pays for bills, as he makes more money. She said that they control their spending, and are not in debt.

As they do not have any children, they have not had to consider educating boys or girls. She has access to social spaces in the community, and is an aerobics dance instructor. She leads aerobics dancing groups in competitions in other sub-districts.

Nok and her husband have shared control over decision-making in the home. Also, both her and her husband decide when it come to sexual intercourse. She is currently on birth control, and has made a decision not to have children yet. She has never experienced violence. Her husband sometimes consumes beer, but does not gamble. Nok does not gamble or drink. It is acceptable for her to obtain a divorce, but she does not wish to have one. Nok has knowledge of the political system due to the media. She votes in every election, and often help man an election booth in Khlong Toei.

Nok feels good about herself when she is working. She feels that working, volunteering, helping others, sharing advice and learning from others contributes to her self-esteem.

Nok believes empowerment means having trust in oneself. She feels empowered as older people listen to her and trust her now. She feels like she has the potential to do good things with the knowledge that DPF had given her. She is now much more talkative, is able to do things she never thought that she could do before, and feels like a role model. Her spouse is happy with her involvement, as he is happy with what makes her happy. Her involvement has had no major effect with her community, except that she can now give more information to her community. The community also trusts her more and she said that they will tell her when a young mother is going to have a baby. She feels empowered in her home, and both her husband and her have decision-making power in the home.¹⁹

3.5.6 “Patcharee”

¹⁹ Nok. Personal Interview. July 3rd, 2009.

Patcharee is fifty-nine years old, married and has two girls, aged twenty-five and thirty-five. She was educated to grade four. She was married when she was eighteen. She was born in Chonburi province. She sells sticky rice and takes care of the trees at DPF. She formally worked as a housekeeper for DPF. Her monthly income is 7300 baht per month. Her husband earns 300 baht per month, which he earns by helping Patcharee sell sticky rice in the morning.

Patcharee used to work in the rice fields in her province. After she stopped working in the rice fields, she began to sell food. After her mother died she wanted her children to come to Bangkok to study. She came to Bangkok originally by herself to find employment. Initially, she could not find a job, but she met people from DPF who asked her to work at DPF. She worked as a housekeeper, but quit recently. Once she had secured employment she sent for her family to live with her. She lives at the school and still takes care of DPF's trees.

Patcharee worked as a housekeeper for DPF for eighteen years. Now she helps DPF cook for special events, and when guests come to visit. She often joins DPF activity days. Her husband is happy with her involvement, and he likes her to be happy.

She has access to family assets, and she shares the ownership of assets with her daughters and husband. In her home she has a TV and fan. She has control over her income and she shares her income with her husband, as he does not earn very much. She pays the bills. If her children want to continue to study it is up to them to pay for it.

There is a commitment to educating both boys and girls in her family, but she only had girls. She helped pay for her girls education when they were younger. She has access to social spaces in the community. She joins many activities in the area, but usually joins DPF activities.

Patcharee feels like she has primary decision-making in the home. Patcharee and her husband no longer have sex, as they are getting older. She said that her and her husband are more like friends now. She planned childbearing, and had three children but one dies. She had her tubes tied after her last child. Patcharee has never experienced violence. Her husband does not gamble or drink, and neither does she. It is acceptable for her to obtain a divorce, but she has never wanted one.

Patcharee is knowledgeable about her legal rights. She has knowledge of the political system because DPF offers information. She always votes, and goes back to her province to do so. She will register in Bangkok for the next election.

Patcharee feels like she has good self-esteem. She feels good that the owner of DPF trusts her to take care of DPF. She gains self-esteem from her children. One of her daughter's has a Bachelor's Degree and she is happy that she was able to raise her well. She is proud to be a woman.

Patcharee believes that empowerment is having patience, working hard, and having a good family. She also said that empowerment comes from the inside. She is able to do good things for her community and she still feels empowered even though she quit her job as a housekeeper. Patcharee appreciates that DPF has made her feel good about her abilities. People treat her like a grandmother and respect her. Community members and the DPF office also respect her, as she has been involved for a long time. Her husband encourages her participation. She feels like she has a responsibility to be a good person in the community.²⁰

3.5.7 “Noi”

²⁰ Patcharee. Personal Interview. July 9th, 2009.

Noi is forty-five years old and has been married twice. She had five children with her first husband, three girls and two boys, and two children with her second husband, two boys. She was married at 14 for her first marriage, and 34 for the second. She has a grade 4 education. She was born in Bureeam Province, in Northeast, Thailand. She sells Som Tam, and makes about 4000 baht per month. She does not know exactly how much her husband earns, as it varies. He earns 300-400 per day when he works, but her does not work regular. Some weeks he works three to four days, other week one day, and sometimes everyday.

Noi came to Khong Toei to live with her ex-husband when she was fourteen years old. She has eight siblings and grew up in Bureeam Province, where her parents still live and grow rice. She has been divorced once and her current husband is younger than her. When she was pregnant with her first child with her ex-husband, he had an affair and gave money to his mistress. His cheating contributed to their divorce.

Noi has been involved with DPF for fifteen years, since one of her sons, Sombat, obtained a scholarship fifteen years ago. Her youngest son, Supachok, just receives a scholarship for the coming school year. She attends activities, seminars and meetings for HIV/AIDS, scholarships, and children's days about one to two times per month. She attends the HIV/AIDS seminars to educate herself, and keep healthy. She also discusses the scholarship program with other families whose children have just received scholarships. Her husband knows that she participates, but does not have an opinion.

Noi has access to family assets. She owns some family assets, including a fridge she bought with money she borrowed from her sister. Her son bought the TV they have in their home. She has control over her income, and she and her husband share their incomes. Sometimes she has to borrow money from people in the community, usually 200-300 baht per month. Noi controls money in the home, and tries not to spend money on unnecessary things. She pays the bills, but her husband often gives her the money to

pay for it. Two of her children received a scholarship from DPF, and he paid for the rest her children's education.

There is a commitment to educating both boys and girls in the family, and thinks that education is important for both boys and girls. She wants all of her children to go to school for a long time, as she did not. She said she would even go without food if it meant that her children could attend school. She believes that if her children study at a high level, they will not have to become labourers. She has access to social spaces in the community, but she only attends activities with Duang Prateep.

In terms of decision-making in the home, Noi would generally consult her husband for big decisions, but would make small decisions by herself. If her husband would like to have sexual intercourse, she will generally say yes, as she said that is what you do when you are in a relationship. She thinks that sex is a bit boring as she is older. She has used contraception for seven years, since her youngest child was born. Her husband would like to have more children, as he is younger. He would especially like to have a girl. During her last pregnancy, she told her husband that it was a girl, but it was actually a son. When she gave birth to her youngest, her breastbone popped out, so this is why she does not want to have any more children. Noi is free from spousal violence. Her and her husband sometimes throw things when they are angry, but this rarely happens. Her husband sometimes drinks on Sundays, and does not gamble. Noi does not drink or gamble. It is acceptable for her to obtain a divorce, and she did divorce her first husband because he was cheating on her. Now, she is happy with her current husband. She usually takes care of the children.

Noi generally knows about the law. She would feel comfortable going to the police if something happened to her. She knows the Thai political system and she knows that this is not her district, and must go to her Provincial Office to vote. She always exercises her right to vote.

Noi feels like she has moderate self-esteem. If she does not feel comfortable doing something, she will not. She does not feel comfortable being a leader, but likes to help out. She believes that good self-esteem comes from both the inside and from making good decisions.

Noi views empowerment, as having the ability to decide things for herself and her children. DPF has provided her with a plethora of information due to the meetings and seminars she attends. She is much more knowledgeable about how to make better decisions for her children. Her husband feels comfortable with her involvement. Her involvement has not changed her relationship with the community and she feels empowered in both her community and home.²¹

3.6 Conclusion

This section has provided an overview of Thailand; Khlong Toei urban poor area; Duang Prateep Foundation and its activities; and finally a life-story of each of the women interviewed. Findings will be discussed and analyzed in the next chapter.

²¹Noi. Personal Interview. July 9th, 2009.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by providing charts, which outline women's lived experiences. Before each chart, a short summary will be given to summarize the findings. Next, each woman's definitions of empowerment will be outlined, with an analysis of how their definition compares to the academic definition of empowerment, as well as an overview of how they feel about their own empowerment, the impact DPF has on their empowerment, and how their relationship may or may not have changed in the community. Finally, the women's definitions of empowerment and their views of empowerment will be analyzed according to their life experiences, to discover what may or may not contribute to their empowerment and their views of empowerment.

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

4.2 Basic Personal Questions and In-Depth Personal Questions

In order to get to know the women interviewed better, a set of basic and in-depth questions were asked. To summarize, the ages varied between twenty-one to fifty-five years old. All of the women were married, with Piya being separated, and Noi having divorced once and married again. All of the women were married before, or at the age of twenty-two, with the exception of Noi, who was married first at fourteen, and a second time at thirty-four. Three of the women were born outside of Bangkok, and four were born in Bangkok. Almost all of the women were food vendors, with the exception of Pii, who is a pre-school teacher. Personal monthly income varied between 3000-9000 baht amongst the women. Household income ranged from 7600-30000 baht per month. Noi was not able to ascertain her household monthly income, as her husband's income varies greatly, month by month. Hobbies/pastimes were varied for the women. Finally, duration of residence in the community ranged from eight years to fifty-one years.

Table 2 Basic Personal Questions and In-Depth Personal Questions

	Age	Marital Status	Education	# Of Children	Age At Marriage	Birth-place	Occupation	Personal Monthly Income	House-hold Income	Hobbies/Pastimes	Duration Of Residence In Community
Name of Woman											
Sangwean	51	Married	None	2	18	Bangkok	Food vendor	4000-6000 baht	11600-13600 baht	Cleaning and cooking	Whole life
Piya	27	Married but, separated	9 th Grade	2	17	Pichit Province	Food vendor	4800 baht	10800 baht	Cleaning, cooking, watching TV	8 years
Pii	43	Married	High School	3	18	Bangkok	Pre-School Teacher	9000 baht	30000 baht	Bead-making	15 years
Dok	43	Married	6 th Grade	1	19	Bangkok	Food vendor	3000 baht	11000 baht	Attending DPF activities	24 years
Nok	30	Married	High School	0	22	Bangkok	Food vendor	4000 baht	25000 baht	Volunteering for healthy activities	Whole life
Patcharee	59	Married	4 th Grade	2	18	Chenjai Province	Food vendor	7300 baht	7600 baht	Selling sticky rice	18 years
Noi	45	Married	4 th Grade	7	14/34	Bureeam Province	Food vendor	4000 baht	Varies		31 years

4.3 Participation in Organization

All of the women interviewed are involved with DPF. Pii, is also involved in other organizations, including Mercy Centre and Sikka Asia Foundation. The duration of women's involvement with DPF varied between one year to eighteen years. The women are all involved in different DPF activities, seminars, programs, meetings and groups. Almost all of the women's husbands are supportive of their involvement with DPF, with the exception of Noi's husband, who has no opinion.

Table 3 Participation in Organization

	Organization Involved With	Duration of Involvement	Type of Participation	Spouse/Partner's Opinion of Participation
Name of Woman				
Sangwean	DPF	1 year	Involved with Credit Union	Spouse supports her involvement
Piya	DPF	3 years	Involved with special education program, as her daughter has Down's Syndrome	Her partner encourages her to send her daughter there
Pii	DPF, Mercy Centre and Sikka Asia Foundation	15 years	Attends meetings, rallies and seminars for advocacy against drugs, children's rights and voting	Spouse is comfortable with her involvement
Dok	DPF	3 years	Helps with DPF activities and events; cooks for people when they join activities; joins seminars about children, scholarships, and sexual education	Spouse is comfortable with her involvement
Nok	DPF	2 years	Works with the Young Mother's Program	Spouse is ok with her involvement, and she often asks him for advice
Patcharee	DPF	18 years	Used to work as a housekeeper, now cooks for special events	Spouse is happy with her involvement and likes her to be happy
Noi	DPF	15 years	Attends activities, seminars and meetings for HIV/AIDS, scholarships and children's days	Spouse has no opinion

4.4 Economic Questions

Almost all of the women interviewed had access to family assets, such as cars, homes and home appliances. Piya, who is separated from her husband but still legally married, does not have access to the home she used to share with her husband. The ownership of assets varied with the women interviewed. Sangwean has no ownership of assets as both the house and care are under her husband's name. Nok's husband bought all of the assets; while Dok's son bought the assets. Patcharee bought all of the large assets in the home. Piya, Pii and Noi women bought some of the assets in the home. The assets in the women's homes are outlined in the chart below. As can be seen from the chart all of the women own a TV, and most own a fridge. Almost all of the women interviewed have control over their income, with the exception of Nok, whose control depends on the situation, and she and her husband try to make decisions together.

The occupations of the spouses of the women interviewed varied. All of the women interviewed stated that there is a sharing of income in the home. Payment of bills varied. Piya and Noi's husband/partner's pay for regular bills, and they pay for miscellaneous expenses. Pii and Dok share bill payment; Sangwean and Nok's husband pay the bills; and Patcharee pay all the bills. The payment of education for the women's children varied, due to age of their children and level of education. Nok has no children; Patcharee paid for her children's primary and secondary school education; one of Noi's children has a scholarship and her and her husband paid for the rest of their education; Sangwean's children are no longer in school; Piya and Pii share the cost of education with their husband/partner; and finally Dok's son had a scholarship for primary and secondary school and now he son pays her most of his education and she helps him out when she has extra money.

Table 4 Economic Questions

	Access to Assets	Ownership of Assets	Large Assets In Home	Control Over Income	Spouse/Partner's Occupation	Sharing Of Income In Home	Who Pays The Bills	Who Pays For Children's Education
Name of Woman								
Sangwean	Has access	No ownership, house and car are in spouse's name	Fridge, washing machine, television	Yes	Retired security officer	Share income within home	Spouse pays regular bills, she pays for miscellaneous expenses	Children no longer in school
Piya	Some access	Some ownership	TV, DVD player, fridge	Yes	Works at Khlong Toei pier	Share income within home	Partners pays regular bills, she pays for miscellaneous expenses	Both her and her partner pay
Pii	Has access	Some ownership	TV, fridge, any many other appliances to help with daily life	Yes and no, depends on what is best for children	Works in a bank	Share income within home	Both do	Both
Dok	Has access	Her son bought most assets	Fridge, TV, fan and computer	Yes	Food vendor	Share income within home	Both	Helps son with University whenever she can
Nok	Has access	Husband bought them all	Fridge, TV, fan, laptop, A/C, DVD, and microwave	Yes	Manager at Khlong Toei pier	Husband shares income with her	Husband usually pays bills	No children
Patcharee	Has access	Shares ownership of assets with her daughters	TV and fan	Control over income	Helps her sell sticky rice	Shares with her husband, as he does not make very much money	She pays the bills	Helped her children at the primary school level, and if her children want to study now it is up to them to pay for it
Noi	Has access	Some ownership	Fridge and TV	Control over income	Works at Khlong Toei pier	Share income within home	Both pay	Some children received a scholarship, her and husband helped paid for their other children

4.5 Cultural Questions

All of the women, who have children, are committed to educating both boys and girls, with the exception of Nok, who does not have children and has never considered the question. All of the women have access to social spaces in the community, but only two women Pii and Nok, regularly join social spaces other than DPF.

Table 5 Cultural Questions

	Commitment To Educating Boys and Girls	Access to Social Spaces	Involvement In Social Spaces
Name of Woman			
Sangwean	Committed to educating both	Has access	Not involved in any other social spaces
Piya	Committed to educating both	Has access	Not involved in any other social spaces
Pii	Committed to educating both	Has access	Involved with Mercy Centre and Sikka Asia Foundation
Dok	Committed to educating both	Has access	Involved with other activities, but primarily Duang Prateep's activities
Nok	No children	Has access	Is an aerobics dance instructor
Patcharee	Committed to educating both	Has access	Generally only attends Duang Prateep activities
Noi	Committed to educating both	Has access	Generally only attends Duang Prateep activities

4.6 Familial/Interpersonal Questions

Piya, Pii, Dok and Patcharee have primary decision-making in the home; Nok decides with her husband and Pii and Noi feel like they have primary decision-making but would generally consult their husbands. All of the women now decide with their spouse/partner's together, when it comes to sexual intercourse. Almost all of the women made/make decisions over childbearing, with the exception of Pii, who did not plan her pregnancies. All of the women are either on contraception, or have had their tubes tied. Sangwean, Nok, Patcharee, Noi of the women have never experienced violence with their spouse/partner. Piya experienced violence with her husband, who she is separated from but does not experience violence with her new partner. Pii and Dok experienced violence during the beginning of their relationship, but they no longer do. Dok's husband sometimes buys lotto, and the rest of the women's husbands/partners do not drink at all; Piya, Nok and Noi's husbands sometimes drink; Patcharee and Sangwean's husbands do not drink at all; Dok's husband used to drink regularly, but has not in the past three months due to his Buddhist devotion and Pii's husband drinks regularly. Dok is the only woman who drinks occasionally, the rest do not. None of the women gamble. Sangwean, Nok, Dok, Patcharee, Noi said that it would be acceptable for them to pursue a divorce, and Noi did divorce her husband. Piya woman wants a divorce from her husband, but has not pursued one for fear he would take custody of their children. Pii tried to get a divorce because her husband had mistresses, and their family encouraged them to stay together, so she found it not to be acceptable to obtain a divorce. Almost all of the have or had primary child-care responsibility, with the exception of Nok, who has no children, and Piya, who shares responsibility with her husband.

Table 6 **Familial/Interpersonal Questions**

	Control Over Decision-Making	Control Over Sexual Relations	Ability to Make Childbearing Decisions	Ability To Use Contraception	Free From Spousal Violence	Does Spouse/ Partner Consume Alcohol	Does Spouse/ Partner Gamble	Do You Drink Or Gamble	Acceptable To Obtain A Divorce	Who Takes Care Of Children
Name Of Woman										
Sangwean	Feels like she has control over decision making	Both her and spouse decide	She made decisions	Uses contraception	Yes	No	No	No	Tried to obtain a divorce in the past but did not due to pressure by family members	She took care of them
Piya	Makes most decisions in the home	Both her and partner decide	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Does not gamble or drink	No, wants to get a divorce from husband but he may take her children is she does	Both her and her partner
Pii	Makes most decisions in the home	Both her and husband decide	Did not plan pregnancies	Had her tubes tied	Experienced violence at beginning of relationship, but does not anymore	Regularly	No	Does not gamble or drink	Yes	Mainly her
Dok	Makes most decisions	Both her and husband decide	Planned pregnancies	On birth control	Never experienced physical violence, husband and her fought verbally when they were first married	Used to regularly, but has not in the past 3 months	Sometimes	Drinks occasionally; does not gamble	Acceptable for her to obtain a divorce if she wanted	Primarily took care of son when he was younger
Nok	Shares control with her husband	Both her and husband decide	No children, and has decided not to have any	On birth control	Never experienced violence	Drinks sometimes	No	Does not drink or gamble	Acceptable for her to obtain a divorce, but	No children

									does not want one	
Patcharee	Makes most decisions	Does not have sex anymore	Planned childbearing	Had her tubes tied	Never experienced violence	No	No	Does not gamble or drink	Acceptable for her to obtain a divorce, but does not want one	Mainly her
Noi	Consults husband for small decisions makes big ones by herself	Both decide	Did not plan pregnancies	Uses contraception now	Never experienced physical violence	Sometimes on Sundays	No	Does not drink or gamble	Divorced first husband, thus acceptable to obtain a divorce	She usually does

4.7 Legal and Political Questions

Sangwean has no knowledge of her legal rights; Dok has little knowledge; and Piya, Pii, Nok, and Noi have good knowledge. All of the women are legally married, and Pii is separated from her husband. Sangwean has no knowledge of the political system, Piya has poor knowledge, and the rest have good knowledge. All of the women always exercise their right to vote.

Table 7 Legal and Political Questions

Name of Woman	Knowledge of Legal Rights	Legal Status Of Marriage	Knowledge of Political System	Exercise Right To Vote
Sangwean	No knowledge	Legally married	No knowledge	Always votes, unless she is in the countryside
Piya	Good knowledge	Still legally married to husband	Poor knowledge	Always votes
Pii	Good knowledge	Legally married	Good knowledge	Always votes, helps out with an election booth during elections
Dok	Little knowledge	Legally married	Good knowledge	Always votes
Nok	Good knowledge	Legally married	Good knowledge	Always votes, helps out with an election booth during elections
Patcharee	Good knowledge	Legally married	Good knowledge	Always votes
Noi	Good knowledge	Legally married	Good knowledge	Always votes

4.8 Self-Esteem Questions

The women's levels of self esteem varied, as well as factors, which do or do not contribute to high self-esteem.

Table 8 Self-Esteem Questions

	Do You Feel Like You Have High Self-Esteem	What Contributes/Does Not Contribute to High Self-Esteem
Name of Woman		
Sangwean	Feels as though woman has moderate self-esteem. She often has to encourage herself to complete tasks.	She believes that self-esteem comes from both inside and outside. She thinks that if people are faced with failure in their life they may have low self-esteem.
Piya	Feels like she has moderate self-esteem. An injury on her hand, inflicted by her husband while he was drunk, has made it difficult for her to pick things up and has damaged her self-esteem.	She believes that her children contribute to her self-esteem and she lives for her children.
Pii	Feels that she has good self-esteem and believes it come from her experiences	She has gained self-esteem from being a community leader and. She enjoys sharing her experiences and giving speeches.
Dok	Feels good about herself because she was able to take care of her mother and son. That has helped her to feel better about her abilities.	She feels that being given the opportunity by DPF to given information in the community contributes to her self-esteem.
Nok	Feels good about herself when she is working.	She feels that working, volunteering, helping others, sharing advice and learning from others contributes to her self-esteem.
Patcharee	Feels like she has good self-esteem.	She gains self-esteem from her children. One of her daughter's has a Bachelor's Degree and she is happy that she was able to raise her well. She is proud to be a woman.
Noi	Feels like she has moderate self-esteem. If she does not feel comfortable doing something, she will not. She does not feel comfortable being a leader, but likes to help out.	She believes that good self-esteem comes from both the inside and from making good decisions.

4.9 Perspectives of Empowerment by the Women Interviewed

This section addresses each of the women's definitions of empowerment, which is compared with academic definitions of empowerment; outlines whether the women feel empowered or not; summarizes each of the women's answers when it comes to DPF's impact on their empowerment; and outlines the impact that their involvement has had with their husbands, and their community.

4.9.1 "Sangwean"

Sangwean views empowerment as having confidence in oneself in order to achieve things in life. This follows closely with Psychological dimension of empowerment, which views empowerment as having self-esteem.

She generally feels empowered, does not like to feel dependant on others. She stated that she would do anything for herself if she could.

Since she has joined DPF she feels much more empowered, as now she is debt-free and financially stable. Her husband is happy with her involvement in the organization. Her relationship has not changed with the community, and she feels empowered at both home and in the community.

4.9.2 "Piya"

Piya views empowerment as having the ability to make decisions. This falls under all of the dimensions of empowerment (economic, socio-cultural, familial/interpersonal, etc.), and also the general definition of empowerment. "The expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them, (Malhotra, 2000: 3).

Piya feels more empowered since she became involved with DPF. She is now able to build networks with other parents of children with disabilities and she feels more confident. She likes that DPF offers many activities for networking. Her husband would not allow her to attend school meetings before. Her involvement with DPF has no effect with her relationship with her partner. She feels that her involvement has strengthened her relationship with community members as she often has dinners with neighbours and takes her children to play with neighbours. She also feels more empowered at home, especially since she has left her husband.

4.9.3 “Pii”

Pii views empowerment as trusting herself, having people comfortable around her, being able to help others, and not pushing people with her power. This falls under the Psychological dimension of empowerment.

Since joining DPF she feels more empowered. She has much more knowledge and understanding of current affairs, such as the political debate between red and yellow shirts. Her involvement has had not impact on her relationship with her husband, as he often joins with her. Her relationship with the community has not changed, but now she is able to offer information to community members. She feels empowered in both her community and home.

4.9.4 “Dok”

Dok views empowerment has having information and knowledge that she can share with the community. This falls under the legal; political; and familial/interpersonal dimension of empowerment, as she is able to have more knowledge about issues that she can share with the community.

She feels empowered as a result of the knowledge she has acquired. She is now from DPF a contact for DPF's Scholarship Program and is able to share her experiences with community members. She feels that now she has more value in her community, which she did not have before she was involved. Her involvement has had no effect on her relationship with her husband. She states that her relationship with her community is much stronger. She feels empowered in both her community and home and her experiences have taught her how to be a good leader. She feels that her experiences with DPF have taught her to become a leader and has gained trust in her community.

4.9.5 “Nok”

Nok believes empowerment means having trust in oneself. She feels empowered as older people in the community now listen to her and trust her now. Nok trusts herself. Nok's view of empowerment, trusting herself, falls under the Psychological dimension of empowerment.

She feels like she has the potential to do good things with the knowledge that DPF had given her. She is now much more talkative and she is able to do things she never thought that she could do before, she feels like a role model. Her spouse is happy with her involvement, as he is happy with what makes her happy. Her involvement has had no major effect with her community, except that she can now give more information to her community. The community also trusts her more and she said that they will tell her when a young mother is going to have a baby. She feels empowered in her home, and both her husband and her have decision-making power in the home.

4.9.6 “Patcharee”

Patcharee believes that empowerment is having patience, working hard, and having a good family. She also said that empowerment comes from the inside. Her response does not fall under the academic definition of empowerment.

She appreciates that DPF has made her feel good about her abilities. People treat her like a grandmother and respect her. Community members and the DPF office also respect her, as she has been involved for a long time. Her husband encourages her participation. She feels like she has a responsibility to be a good person in the community.

4.9.7 “Noi”

Noi views empowerment, as having the ability to decide things for herself and her children. This falls under all of the dimensions of empowerment (economic, socio-cultural, familial/inter-personal, etc.) and also the general definition of empowerment. “The expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them, (Malhotra, 2000: 3).

DPF has provided her with a plethora of information due to the meetings and seminars she attends. She is much more knowledgeable about how to make better decisions for her children. Her husband feels comfortable with her involvement. Her involvement has not changed her relationship with the community and she feels empowered in both her community and home.

4.10 Comparisons and Contrasts Between Women’s Views on Empowerment, and Contributing Factors To Empowerment

This section will discuss how women’s lived experiences may contribute to their views of their own empowerment, as well as how they define empowerment.

4.10.1 Age

Age may have much to do with women feeling empowered. For example, Sangwean and Patcharee are both older than 50 (51 and 59 respectively), and both stated that they feel empowered. Sangwean stated that, “*I feel empowered and I do not like to depend on others,*”¹ and Patcharee stated that “*...I feel empowered, even though I have quite my job as a housekeeper,*” and “*...people in the community treat me like a grandmother.*”² Through conversations with Thai Nationals, the researcher found that people that are older tend to be more respected in Thailand. Thus, their empowerment may also be a result of a women’s age and the respect that others have of them and give them.

4.10.2 Misinterpretation of the Concept “Empowerment”

Some women may have not quite understood the concept of empowerment, when they were asked how do they define empowerment. For example, Patcharee defined empowerment as having patience, working hard, and having a good family. This definition does not explicitly fall under the academic definitions of empowerment. Thus, although Patcharee’s response may not contribute to a new academic way of defining empowerment, it is interesting to see how poor women define empowerment.

4.10.3 Participation with DPF

The different roles and responsibilities given to women involved with DPF can contribute to their empowerment and how they view empowerment. For example, Nok, has been given the opportunity to give information to the community with DPF, and she feels empowered as older people not listen to her and trust her. Also, Noi views empowerment, as having the ability to decide things for herself and for her children. She feels like DPF has provided her with much information, which she uses to make better decisions for her children. Also, Pii views empowerment as being able to help others.

¹ Sangwean. Personal Interview. July 19th, 2009.

² Patcharee. Personal Interview. July 9th, 2009.

Due to her involvement with DPF, she is able to offer information to the community. Also, Dok views empowerment as having information and knowledge that she can share with her community. She feels empowered as a result of the knowledge she has acquired being involved with DPF. She is now a contact for DPF's Scholarship Program. Thus women's participation with DPF contributes to how women view empowerment.

4.10.4 Access and Ownership of Assets

Access to, and ownership of assets may contribute to women's empowerment. For example, Piya does feel empowered, but her lack of access to some assets may make her feel less empowered, then Pii, who both has access and some ownership to assets.

4.10.5 Personal Life Experiences

Women's personal life experiences may have much to do with women's perceptions of empowerment and how they define empowerment. Dok took it upon her self to get an ID card when she was 15, so she could help support her family. She feels empowered now, and her experiences could contribute to her empowerment. Piya left her husband, because he was abusive to her. Her life experience could also contribute to her empowerment. Patcharee moved to Bangkok, by herself, to find a job and ensure that her children would obtain a good education. Her experience could lead to her feeling empowered.

4.10.6 Acceptability of Divorce

Acceptability of divorce may impact women's empowerment. For example, Piya wants to obtain a divorce from her husband, but will not pursue one as she fears her estranged husband may take custody of her children. Also, Sangwean wanted to obtain a divorce in the past, but did not pursue one due to pressure from family members. They

may feel less empowered than Noi, who got a divorce from her first husband, because he had affairs.

4.10.7 Childbearing Decisions

Having ownership of one's body may contribute to a woman's empowerment. For example, Sangwean made childbearing decisions, and she generally feels empowered. Thus, childbearing decisions can impact women's empowerment.

4.10.8 Self-Esteem

Self-esteem can be directly correlated with empowerment, and women's definitions of empowerment. For example, Piya, has moderate self-esteem. An injury on her hand, inflicted by her husband while he was drunk, has made it difficult for her to pick things up and has damaged her self-esteem. Although she did say she was empowered, her empowerment may not be as strong as other women, who have not suffered blows to self-esteem. Patcharee feels like she has good self-esteem, and her daughter obtaining a Bachelor Degree contributes to her good self-esteem. Thus, her empowerment may be stronger than Piya's.

4.10.9 Level of Education

In every case, all of the women felt empowered, however they do not have high education levels, with all of the women having a high school education, less. Sangwean for example has not formal education and she generally feels empowered. Thus, women's education level does not equate empowerment.

4.10.10 Duration of Women's Involvement

The duration of a woman's involvement with DPF, may impact the degree of empowerment a woman feels. For example, Sangwean has only been involved with DPF for one year, so her empowerment may be shallower than Pii who has involved with DPF for 15 years.

4.10.11 Violence

Experiencing violence may have an impact on empowerment. For example, Piya, who experienced much violence with her estranged husband, may not be as empowered as Nok, who has never experienced violence with her husband.

4.11 Conclusion

It is clear, that women's personal experiences may or may not contribute to their empowerment. Moreover, women's lived experiences may dictate how they view empowerment. It is interesting to note that although women may or may not have fully understood the concept of empowerment, it is clear that the women are empowered. Empowerment is not an academic construct; it has only been rigorously defined by academia. Despite probably not being exposed to the concept of empowerment many times, the women are living proof of tangible empowerment. Their lived experiences have helped to shape them, and may or may not contribute to higher levels of empowerment, or lower levels.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study has helped to add to the current literature on women's empowerment, especially within the context of NGOs role in empowering women. In order to address the research problem and purpose of this study, three research questions and one hypothesis was posed.

To reiterate the research problem of this study is to examine the impact that DPF has on women's empowerment in Khlong Toei urban poor area, Bangkok, due to the lack of information on the topic. The study has two purposes. The first is to determine if DPF is successful in empowering women in Khlong Toei urban poor area; and the second is to discover how women themselves define empowerment. All of this was accomplished through the questionnaires administered to seven women who use the services provided by DPF in Khlong Toei urban poor area. In addition, the literature review provides cases of women's empowerment in other countries, including India, Chile and Kenya. The country cases will be elaborated in this chapter, and compared to empowerment in Thailand.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The findings, in relation to the research questions, will be discussed now.

5.2.1 What are women's lived experiences in Bangkok Urban Poor Areas?

As can be seen in Chapter I and Chapter II, all of the women interviewed come from various backgrounds, which has contributed to a more diverse and interesting study.

The women are various ages; economic status; different number of children; educational attainment; etc. As can be seen in Chapter IV, several of the women's lived experiences can contribute to their perceptions of their own empowerment, and how they define empowerment. For example, factors such as violence, childbearing decisions and access and ownership of assets can contribute to women's personal empowerment; and their life experiences, and understanding of the concept empowerment, can affect how they define empowerment.

5.2.2 What are the views, of women in urban poor areas in Bangkok, on empowerment and power?

In general, this study did not establish with any new ways of defining empowerment, as most of the answers given fell under the academic definitions and indicators of empowerment, that have already been established. For example, Noi views empowerment, as having the ability to make decisions for herself and her children, which falls under all of the dimensions of empowerment (economic, socio-cultural, familial/inter-personal, etc.), and also the general definition of empowerment. "The expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them, (Malhotra, 2000: 3). Also, Sangwean views empowerment as having confidence in oneself in order to achieve things in life. This follows closely with Psychological dimension of empowerment, which views empowerment as having self-esteem.

However, an interesting finding was the way Patcharee defines empowerment, which is having patience, working hard and having a good family. This does not fall under academic definitions of empowerment, and it is interesting to see how poor women define empowerment. As can be seen in Chapter IV, several of the women's lived experiences contribute to their perceptions of their own empowerment, and how they define empowerment.

5.2.3 What is the role of organizations and movements in empowering women in urban poor areas in Bangkok?

In general, all of the women interviewed felt that their involvement in DPF's activities contributed to their empowerment at the public (community). Many of the women are now able to build ties with the community. This finding can be related to Bachrach & Botwinick (1998), who discuss how experiences within a community can actually transform a participant in several developmental ways, (Bachrach & Botwinick, 1998: 133). In the case of Thailand, the women who took part in DPF, experienced empowerment. Piya, has built connections with other women in her community who have children with disabilities. Dok feels like her experiences with DPF has allowed her to gain the trust of her community. Nok has gained the trust of her community, as community members often tell her when a young woman is going to have a baby. Patcharee has gained the respect of her community by working for DPF.

Nok and Pii are involved in, 'local political system/campaigns' by helping with election booths. As a result of all the women's involvement with DPF, women have 'access to social spaces.' Many of the women are now involved with 'campaigns for rights and awareness', including Pii, who has learned much about the Red/Yellow shirt debate and Noi has become more aware about health issues, due to attending HIV/AIDS information sessions. Sangwean now has 'access to credit,' as a result of her involvement with DPF. All of the indicators discussed in this section are from the Community Space, which can be found in Table 1: Empowerment: Spaces, Dimensions and Indicators. As can be seen in Chapter IV, several of the women's lived experiences contribute to their perceptions of their own empowerment, and how they define empowerment.

Thus, the Hypothesis, if a woman takes part in Duang Prateep's activities, seminars, meetings, etc., it will positively contribute to her empowerment, was validated. However, it is important to note that there are some limitations to the empowerment that

women have gained from their involvement in DPF, in the private sector. The limitations will now be discussed.

In terms of the economic dimension of empowerment, where economic empowerment in the household is indicated through 'relative contribution to family support,' most of the women do not support their family, relative to their husbands, except for in two cases, Patcharee and Noi. However, in all of the cases women have 'access to employment', which is an indicator for economic empowerment in the community. However, this phenomenon may have to do with the social acceptance of women's employment.

Pii and Piya do not have the 'domestic support' as indicated in the Legal Dimension of empowerment. 'Domestic support,' in the context of this study refers to support from family members. Pii was persuaded by her family members not to get a divorce from her husband, and thus she did not pursue one. Moreover, Piya, does not have the 'domestic support' to pursue a divorce. She will not divorce her husband, as she fears he may take her children away.

5.3 Discussion of Findings

Sen (2005) has argued that women are not passive recipients of welfare-enhancing projects but are actually active promoters and facilitators of social transformation, (222-23). Women can transform their own lives and the lives of others. This study verified that they do have ability to change others lives, but some women lack the ability to change their own lives, and that social transformation generally occurs at the public level.

As already stated in Chapter Five, women's empowerment tends to be stronger in the public sphere, as opposed to the private sphere in the case of Thailand. For example, in the economic dimension of empowerment, where economic empowerment in the

household is indicated through 'relative contribution to family support,' many of the women do not support their family, relative to their husbands, except for in two cases, Patcharee and Noi.

However, in all of the cases women have 'access to employment', which is an indicator for economic empowerment in the community. Pii and Piya do not have the 'domestic support' as indicated in the legal dimension of empowerment. Pii was persuaded by her family members not to get a divorce from her husband, and thus she did not pursue one. Moreover, Piya, does not have the 'domestic support; to have a divorce. She will not divorce her husband, as she fears he may take her children away.

Now findings on empowerment in terms of indicators from Thailand, will be compared with the other countries discussed in the Literature Review, India, Chile and Kenya especially in regards to how empowerment usually occurs in the public sphere, and may lack in the private sphere, as well as compares the countries in terms of political empowerment.

In terms of economic empowerment, India and Thailand are quite similar as women in both countries have access to employment, which fulfills the 'women's access to employment' in the community section of economic empowerment. In terms of 'women's visibility and access to social spaces' in the community dimension of socio-cultural, in general women in both countries do have access to social spaces in the community. In terms of empowerment at the household level, it seems as though it will be difficult for women to be fully empowered in both countries, due to the caste system in India and the cultural trend of women obeying their husbands in Thailand.

In terms of political empowerment, women in India do have a say in political life, as they have had a say in changing policies. For example, The Women's Rights Initiative (an Indian NGO) has prepared the Draft of the Domestic Violence Against Women Bill in 1991, which has helped to expand the definition of domestic violence and includes

honour killings, sexual harassment in the workplace, and national and transnational trafficking. Although, these rights may be outlined, but it is unclear if there are any measures to ensure they are enforced. However, in terms of the private sphere women, women in India are still victims of the caste system, which may mean that poorer women do not have an ability to become involved in political life. Although women in Thailand do not live under a caste system, they are not as involved with political life. It could be because women in Thailand have a higher level of empowerment in general, when compared to women in India and do not have to seek ways to better their lives when compared to women in India. In terms of voting, both women in Thailand and India are both able to exercise their vote. Thus women in both countries have political equality, but not political influence, (Phillips, 1991: 19).

When looking at differences with Thailand and Chile, when it comes to political empowerment and empowerment in the public and private spheres there are stark differences. To begin, women in Chile tend to be empowered in both the public and private sphere, and from the case studies of women in this research, it was concluded that there are limitations to women's empowerment in the private sphere. Women in both Thailand and Chile, both generally fulfill the indicators of 'women's access to employment' and 'women's access to credit' in the community space of the economic dimension. DPF offers credit to both men and women in Khlong Toei, and SERNAM proposed a bill that would ensure that women could access credit without their husband's permission.

Women's groups in Chile are one of the strongest women's organizations in the developing world and Chilean women's groups have been extremely effective and active in garnering rights for women. SERNAM has worked tirelessly to promote and protect the rights of women in Chile. However, women in Chile they still lack equality in political institutions women only fill 17 percent of parliamentary seats worldwide and 14 percent of ministerial-level positions.¹ In Thailand and Chile, it is clear that women have

¹ <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/62617/swanee-hunt/let-women-rule>

achieved political equality, but not deep political influence, as in both countries women have the ability to vote, (Phillips, 1991: 19). Thus, even in Chile the political indicator is not fulfilled.

Traditional cultural norms in Kenya tend to be based on a system of patriarchy, and even though women lack empowerment in the private sphere, they may still be able to be empowered in the public sphere, (Sifuna, 2006: 84). For example, NGOs can help to facilitate empowerment. However, just because there are outlets to improve empowerment, it does not mean that empowerment will occur in both the private and public sphere. This is the same as in Thailand, as women may be able to be empowered in the private sphere, but may lack certain indicators for empowerment in the private sphere. The cases studies in this research exemplified that. For example,

Moreover, political empowerment may be difficult for Kenyan women to attain, as they often have double or even triple roles, and their workdays are far longer than a man's. Professor Elishba Kimani (2008) from Kenyatta University in Nairobi described Kenyan women as 'beasts of burdens'.² The same goes for Thai women, as from the case studies, most of the women have double, or even triple roles in the home, which included childrearing, housework, and are expected to be employed. Moreover, cultural roles may limit a women's ability to be politically empowered in both Thailand and Kenya. For example, in Kenya, women tend to be under a thumb of patriarchy, which can be exemplified by the comments of Kenneth (2008), a subsistence coffee farmer, who believes that boys and girls have very distinct gender roles that are dictated by culture and need to be observed; and women in Thailand are often expected to obey their husbands.

In all of the countries, there is evidence of NGOs working to empower women. For example, DPF in Thailand; The Association for Community Development (ACD) in

² Elishba Kimani. Personal Interview. May 14th, 2008.

India; SERNAM in Kenya; and finally Women's Voices in Kenya. However, what is needed is more of an analysis of the impact that NGOs have on women's empowerment in both public and private spheres, as well as the true effectiveness of such projects. Is empowerment merely shallow? Are empowerment activities more effective in the public sphere, rather than the private? And the questions continue. However, it is acknowledged that information may be difficult to garner about women's lived experiences in the private sphere, as women may not be open to answering questions about their private lives.

It is clear from the study in Thailand that activities by the DPF have been successful in empowering women in the public sphere; however, limitations still arise in the private sphere. Moreover, women's views of personal empowerment and definitions of empowerment can be influenced by personal life experiences, and knowledge of the concept of empowerment. It is important to note that while women may or may not have fully understood the concept of empowerment, it is clear that the women interviewees are empowered. Empowerment is not just an academic construct; it has merely been meticulously defined by academia. Despite most likely lacking exposure to the concept of empowerment the women are evidence of empowerment. Now, links will be made between democracy and empowerment.

5.4 Democracy and Empowerment

Women's empowerment is vital for democracy. For example, in Western countries, where women experience high levels of empowerment, democracy is strong. However, there are limitations to democracy, especially when it comes to equality between men and women.

The inequality of democracy can be traced back to its roots, wherein the Ancient Greeks believed in democracy, that excluded women, (Phillips, 1991: 1). In many democratic, developed countries around the world, women experience formal equality,

equal right to vote, stand in elections and compete for office, etc. However, there is a lack of women's formal representation in the government in municipal, provincial and federal levels, (Phillips, 1991: 15). In order to fight for their rights, women's groups "...drew on [their] concerns with forms of organization and inter-personal relations to develop a radically participatory notion of democracy, and this was applied not only to women's groups but to every aspect of political life," (Phillips, 1991: 112). Bachrach and Botwinick (1998) discuss that involvement in public affairs can provide citizens with an "...integrative and enriching experience that is unattainable in all other spheres of human activity," (130). Thus women must be more involved in politics, and decisions that explicitly affect them.

However, in developing nations, such as the ones discussed in this study, women's burdens may make it difficult to ensure democracy. For example, in Kenya women often have double or even triple roles, and women in Thailand are expected to work and also to take care of financial resources, and also take care of children, as evidenced by this women in this case study. Moreover, cultural expectations may make it difficult to ensure democracy, as in the case of the caste system and patriarchal ordering of society in India, and the expectation of women to obey their husbands in Thailand. Thus, democracy is limited in developing countries, by women's ability to be equal.

Equality can be facilitated through empowerment. It will of course not lead to perfect equality, but it can improve equality. Women have achieved formal political equality, but not political influence, (Phillips, 1991: 19). Democracy will always be hard to achieve in developing countries, however women's empowerment is an excellent starting point. Women must be empowered in the community and broader areas of political empowerment. Women's experience deprivation, when it comes to political life. Sen (2000) discusses deprivations. Poverty can be a capability deprivation, and may limit a women's ability to engage in political life, which is the case in Thailand. A person's deprivation may have different origins and can take on different forms, (29).

It seems as though it will be impossible for every developing country to achieve democracy, but by encouraging access to organizations that work to empower women, democracy can improve. However, it is not enough, just to get women into politics, women must have a say in decisions that affect them.

5.5 Recommendations

It is recommended that further research on the topic of women's empowerment in Urban Poor Areas in Bangkok is conducted, especially in the English language so it is more accessible to scholars outside of Thailand. Also, it is recommended that NGOs develop activities to improve women's empowerment. Last, it is recommended that further research continues to be conducted to determine women's empowerment in the private and public sphere, as well as the links between the two.

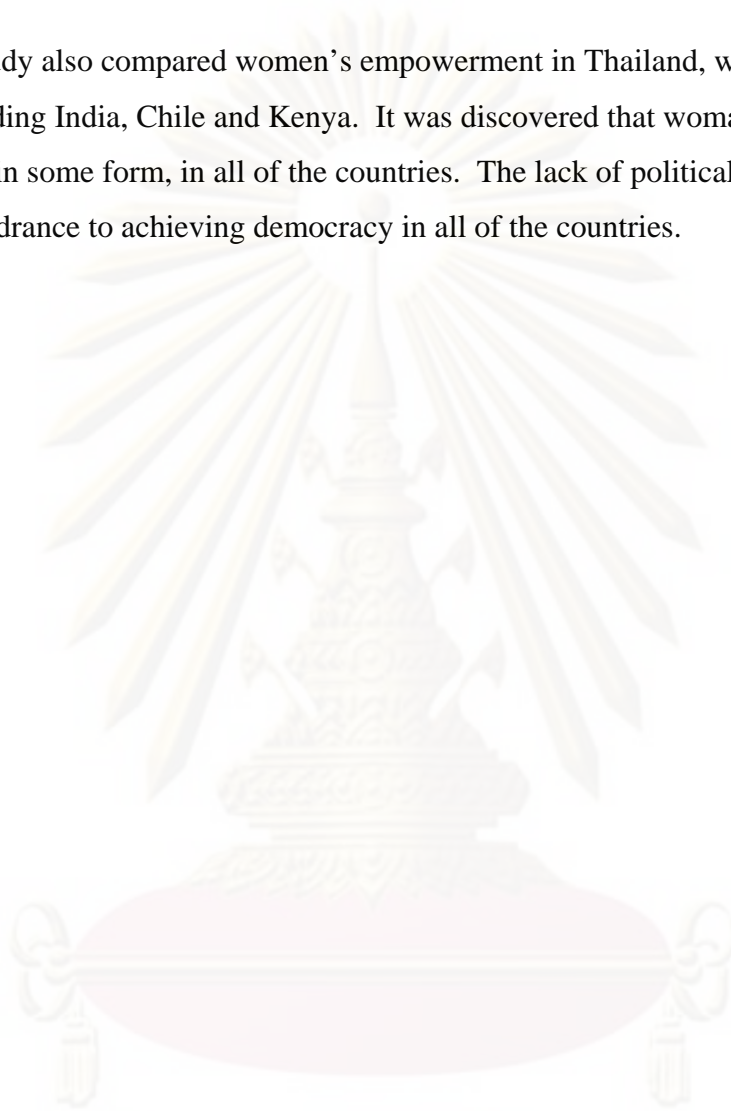
5.6 Conclusions

After a review of previous literature, it was found that there was a lack of information on the status of women in Urban Poor Areas in Bangkok. Also, there was a lack of studies on NGOs impact on empowerment of women in Thailand in English. Thus the research in this study provides new information about the lived experiences of women in Urban Poor Areas, the impact that NGOs have on women's empowerment, allows women to discuss how they view empowerment, and provides new information about the link between the public and private sphere in terms of empowerment. It was found, that while women are more empowered in the public sphere as a result of NGOs activities, there are limitations to their empowerment in the private sphere.

It was assumed at the outset of research that this survey would provide new definitions of empowerment. However, this was not that case as all of the answers provided as how women view empowerment, fell under the academic definition of

empowerment. The one exception was Patcharee, whose answer when it came to empowerment, may be attributed to her misunderstanding of the term empowerment.

This study also compared women's empowerment in Thailand, with several countries, including India, Chile and Kenya. It was discovered that woman lack political empowerment in some form, in all of the countries. The lack of political empowerment is seen as a hindrance to achieving democracy in all of the countries.



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APPENDIX

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
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QUESTIONNAIRE

Basic Personal Questions:

Age:

Marital Status:

Education:

Number of Children:

Age at Marriage:

Birthplace:

Occupation:

Personal Monthly Income:

Household Income:

Hobbies/Pastimes:

In-depth Personal Questions:

-How long have you lived in this community?

-Please discuss your family background?

-In general, please tell me more about yourself?

Questions About Participation in Organization:

-Please describe the organization you are involved with?

-How long have you been involved?

-How do you participate in this organization?

-How does your spouse feel about your participation in the organization/movement?

Economic:

- Do you have access to family assets?
- Do you have ownership of family assets?
- What large assets do you have in your home?
- Do you have control over your income?
- Does your husband work?
- Do you share your income with your husband? Does your husband share his income with you?
- Who pays the bills?
- Who pays for children's education? (If they are in high school)

Cultural:

- Is there a commitment to educating both boys and girls in your family?
- Do you have access to social spaces in the community?
- Are you involved in any other social spaces in your community?

Familial/Interpersonal:

- Do you have control over decision-making in the home?
- Do you have control over sexual relations?
- Do you have ability to make childbearing decisions, use contraception?
- Are you free from spousal violence?
- Does your husband consume alcohol on a regular basis?
- Does your husband gamble?
- Do you drink or gamble?
- Is it acceptable for you to obtain a divorce?
- Who takes care of the children?

Legal:

Are you knowledgeable about your legal rights?

Are you and your husband legally married, or are you common-law?

Political:

-Do you have knowledge of the political system?

-Do you exercise your right to vote?

Psychological:

-Do you feel like you have high self-esteem?

-What do you feel contributes or does not contribute to good self-esteem?

Questions Pertaining to Empowerment:

-How would you define empowerment/power?

-Do you feel empowered?

-Do you feel that your participation in the organization/movements contributes to your empowerment? Why/Why not?

-Do you feel more empowered since you have been involved with this organization?

-Has your participation in organizations/movement had any effect on your relations with your spouse?

-Has your participation in organizations/movement had any effect on your relations with other community members?

-Do you feel empowered in both the community and at home? Why/Why not?

BIOGRAPHY

Kelsy Cummings is 23 years old and from Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. She graduated in 2008 from The University of Ottawa, with a Bachelor of Social Science Degree (Honours), with a specialization in International Development and Globalization.

Kelsy's work experience includes a position as a fundraising supervisor for Public Outreach, and fundraised for many NGOs, including Greenpeace, Amnesty International, Save the Children, and the Red Cross of Ontario.

In terms of development issues, she is most interested in women's empowerment and gender studies. She hopes to work with an NGO, which focuses on women's empowerment in the future.



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