



**What works in girls empowerment and why?
Examining PLAN-Aflatoun's Project for empowering girls through
finance and life skills education**

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List of Acronyms

9YBE	Nine Years Basic Compulsory Education
AED	Academy for Educational Development,
AGEI	African Girls' Education Initiative
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSFE	Council for Social Foundations of Education
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
EFA	Education for All
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
EST	Ecological System Theory
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists: FAWE
GAD	Gender and Development
ICESR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ILO	International Labour Law
ISS	International Institute of Social Studies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education in Rwanda
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RWAMREC	Rwanda Men's Resource Center
SAGE	Strategies for advancing girls' education
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WID	Women in Development
YWCA	World Young Women's Christian Association

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Abstract

This study is about what works in relation to girls' empowerment through education. Taking the example of a project designed by PLAN and Aflatoun and designed for Rwanda with two local NGOs, RWAMREC and YWCA, the study considers how the project was designed to take into consideration the needs of girls in relation to their empowerment. In particular, from a feminist perspective on policy design, this study is based on close engagement with Aflatoun staff and reports in particular. The study analyses such reports, as well as the data on which they relied on for planning, and the process of design of the curriculum and the project. In particular the study identifies those informed through the course of the project design process, and considers how they are informed about the priorities when it comes to girls' empowerment through education. One of the distinctive features of this study was that the researcher was motivated to comment on the policy design process by one of the key institutions involved (Aflatoun). This led to some interaction and learning on both sides. A key finding of the study is that throughout the processes of curriculum development and project design, local partners are involved, but the voices of the girls themselves are mainly notable by their absence. At best, teachers act as informants about their priorities and their needs. One of the problems is that the pilot study on which the project draws lessons was conducted in other countries except in Rwanda. This meant that a full contextualization is still a challenge to the program. PLAN-Aflatoun recognized this and allowed for in their 'Contextualization Manual', but the study concludes that it is important to work on contextualizing the policies when implementing projects and/or programs.

Relevance to Development Studies

The study works on a project, which is one of the key institutions of development intervention. The link between projects and wider development policies although outside the scope of this study, is a relevant background question, which informs the research approach overall. From a feminist standpoint, the study seeks to clarify not only why one specific project on girls' empowerment through education might not work as well as it could, but also why in general it is so hard to design truly contextualised development policies from outside.

Keywords

Empowerment – girls – education – project design – PLAN – Aflatoun – Rwanda – feminist – contextualisation

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Why This Study was Chosen: Reflecting on Subjectivity

This study sets out to fill a gap that has been identified in the literature concerning project design for girls' empowerment. Through detailed exploration of a case study, the thesis sets out to analyze a policy design process, using a critical feminist lens. The study qualitatively investigates and examines critically the meanings, both in general and in the specific project being studied, of key concepts and ideas. These include 'empowerment' and especially girls' 'empowerment through education', and also the 'policy design' process among development partners. The study examines how policies intended to 'empower' girls are constructed and used by different policy makers and implementers, and how these meanings inform and shape policy at the level of talk and action of the international organizations and civil society.

As a Rwandan, female researcher and former NGO worker searching on NGO work in Rwanda, it is important to consider my positionality in the research process. According to (Creswell 2007), reflexivity is the understanding and acceptance that *"how we write is a reflection of our own interpretation based on the culture, social, gender, class, and personal politics that we bring to the research"*. He add on by saying that all qualitative writing is positioned within a stance or standpoint.

Researching a Rwandan case study posed some reflexivity dilemmas for me. What constituted my scope of study is my home country which I am deeply embedded as a patriotic citizen with best interest for my country at the fore front. This implied hopes and dreams on what I believed is the best in terms of girls empowerment grounded in my heavy cultural background which could influence and ground my analysis.

Likewise, in my former capacity as an NGO program officer in Rwanda, I have experienced some cases of disconnection between NGOs interventions and the community needs, this is not to say that NGO's programs' efforts are wrong or are designed with bad intentions, but rather NGOs sometimes get caught up in conducting their own missions or serving their donor's interest, and may not necessarily be addressing what the community actual needs are or rather what is sustainable to the community.

Exposure to this issues made me realize that studies on design and set up of NGO programs are rare. The gap in scholarship on designing phase of programs or project needed to be addressed and it is not surprising that my interest in Girls' empowerment found a good opportunity for exploration with PLAN-Aflatoun Project as it presented a twofold advantage as follows: 1st, it was an occasion to undertake the research on a field of strong ties and personal concern (girls empowerment), and 2nd, rather than the normal way of evaluating a program through the lens of the beneficiaries (girls for this case), It was an oppor-

tunity to research the set up and the design of the project, understand the motivation for the program, its rationale and what makes it so important, plus the designing and planning process of the project.

Thus, in researching on the PLAN-Aflatoun project, I oath to undertake this within the framework of constant reflection on my position, my beliefs, my bias and my experience and to try to minimize the interference of the latter with my research. This was only made possible, wearing an academic research hat where by one the major thing to do was to eliminate the othering approach to NGOs, frequently represented within the personal agenda and donors' agenda implementing organs framework.

My main approach to the research was to let the interviewed staff of the organizations speak from their own experience when supplement what is in their working documents. Although, not much applied, my previous experience with Rwanda and Aflatoun was both beneficial and delicate in probing for further understanding of the discussion. I was both an insider, and outsider.

As an academic researcher, I did extensive reading and searching on the subject of my research. I also benefited from valuable and fruitful discussion with my fellow students mates and this revealed to be important in mediating my outsider position and approaching my research with less bias and genuine focus. I had to avoid my pre conceived ideas of constructed realities by NGOs to avoid judgment. Nevertheless, it is important to note that staff may fear or do not like to talk about their organization failure as this mean their failures as well because they are affiliated to the organization and this still make a small portion of the findings to account for constructed realities by the organization.

1.2. Background

1.2.1. Empowerment and Girls' education the global context

In the current development agenda, empowerment of girls has widely become an important goal as reflected through various international, national and regional initiatives. Empowering women and girls through education is often publicized as a way to reduce the gender inequality in that education is seen by some as an indicator of the status of women and girls and more importantly as an agent for girls' empowerment.

However, as argued by Malhotra and Mather 1997, associating education to women and girls empowerment has rarely been informed by realistic analysis. Moreover, development interventions to address gender inequality and their beneficial effects in the developing countries are too often taken for granted where the commonly usage phenomenon is in funding project proposal to ensure that old programs get new funding, and sometimes not adequately or genuinely assessed. Furthermore, when talking about empowerment of women and girls through education as a target of development interventions, the focus is

prodigiously on access and enrolment, often at the expenses of thinking at specific girls and women's needs in terms of education and also girls and women participation in sharing their experiences as competent, although constrained, actors.

In the education spheres, gender inequality is one major challenges faced by girls and women with social and economic mishap. Significant miles stone has been achieved in the domain of accessibility to education to effect gender parity in education. Different education initiatives and practices are being formulated and implemented worldwide such as the MDG2 of universal primary education and the MDG3 of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Dakar Platform for Action in Education for All (EFA) (Unterhalter et al. 2012), the ICESR, CEDAW; and an increased collaborative effort of various International non-governmental, development banks, bilateral agencies and UN agencies and organs such as UNGEI, AGEI, AED, and SAGE (Monkman and Hoffman 2013:66); but despite the existence of these realized initiatives, an estimates of “77 million children, 55% of whom are girls, are still denied any form of education”(Unterhalter 2010: 1).

Further concerns are on the “larger discrepancy beyond primary education, the quality of education, and the myriad issues beyond the ‘processing’ of girls and boys through school” (Monkman and Hoffman 2013). These persistent gaps call for a review of strategies to create conducive and favourable environment in terms of participation, retention and completion of girls in schools. In other words, success of girls in schools and in their social economical lives. Monkman and Hoffman (2013) argues that access and enrolment is not enough and having access does not guarantee full enrolment and on the other hand enrolment does not guarantee attendance nor it does not guarantee the largely celebrated empowerment outcome of education.

1.2.2. Empowerment and girls' education the Rwandan context

The system of education in Rwanda has seen many reform after the 1994. But the current structure as of 2008 is the nine years basic compulsory education (9YBE) set as a way of implementing the education for all (EFA). The education structures comprises of three years of Pre-primary education organized in nursery schools of age group 3 and 6, Six years of Primary Education and the official age group at that level is from 7 years to 12 years, Six years of secondary education (composed of two track: lower secondary or the first three years and upper secondary or the second three years respectively) with the official age for this category to be from 13 years to 18 years, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) taught in Technical Secondary Schools (TSS) and Vocational Training Centres (TVET) and colleges of Technology, Tertiary Education that comprises between two and six years as per the institution of learning and field of study and the targeted qualification such as Diploma, Bachelor's degree, Engineering degree, Professional doctorate in medicine, Master's degree

and Doctorate degree, and finally the Adult Literacy Education (Education statistical yearbook 2012).

In Rwanda, gender equality is a central priority as echoed in various national, regional and international initiatives that the government subscribe to and implement with the support of various international, non-governmental and UN agencies. At the national level, the commitment is reflected in the goodwill of the government to institutionalize gender equality through initiatives that promote girls and women in different social and economic spheres of the country. Different country working or operational instruments such as the 2003 national constitution in its article 16, EDPRS all 1, 2, and 3 (Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy) where gender is a cross cutting issue and a key aspect of all planning, the (2012) PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) with a target of improving completion and attainment rates for girls, the organic Education Law of Rwanda with a clear gender equality goal, The girl's education policy of 2008, the 2010-2015 ESSP (Education Sector Strategic PLAN) and its appraisal report, as well some other institutional initiatives such as the school campaign concept paper 'Making a difference for girls' led by MINEDUC, the Imbutu Foundation and the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the First Lady's Award to girls for Achievement destined to girls graduating at the secondary level with the highest grades in the country, different non-government organizations working in Rwanda with sponsorship programs that support girls education just to name a few such as PLAN International, CARE international, Actionaid, save the children etc...

All these efforts national led programs subscribe and emphasizes on accelerating progress towards achieving the MDGs goals 2 and 3 related education outcomes and gender equality. These strong institutional measures, policy and commitments are accompanied by budgetary commitments by the Rwandan government with full support of international-multilateral donors attracted by and in support of the gender equality cause in education.

It goes by saying that overall national and international commendable effort to increase girls' education for gender equality has brought about positive change whereby the number of girls attending schools in Rwanda has increased dramatically after the genocide of 1994. According to different national sources such as the National Statistic of Rwanda, the Gender Monitoring Office, the ESSP and its appraisal 2010-2015, Rwanda is in the right track in terms of gender parity whereby for a period of over five years from 2008 to 2012, the Net Enrolment Rate for girls (98%) remained higher than for boys (95%) at the primary level (Education statistical yearbook 2012). Secondary education statistical information as found in the Education statistical yearbook 2012, are broken down as according to the two categories (lower and upper education levels of the second-

ary education) and reflect changes as from year 2008 which account for a continuous increase in staffing, students number, schools, infrastructures and learning materials. Key figures detailing issues of retention, completion and exam performance are also available and for the purpose of this research only statistics related to the lower secondary education level will be discussed and analysed as my case study focus area is the secondary lower level.

The table in Appendices (see Appendix A) indicates a general increase in enrolment rate with gender parity maintained by years respectively. In 2008, figures show a total of male enrolment of 51% vs. female 49%, year 2009, 50% male vs 50% female, year 2010, 48% male vs 52% female, year 2011, 47% male vs 53% female and year 2012, 47 male vs 53% female.

This success in maintaining gender parity and focusing on encouraging girls to attend schools is grounded in the broader understanding that investing in girls' education contributes to the achievement of overall economic and social well-being objectives such as increased child health, improved productivity, and decreased fertility and infant mortality (ESSP 2010-2015).

Although this instrumental vision of the benefits of girls' education brought about gender parity benefit, it is worth noting that the celebrated achievement of gender parity does not account for parity with completion. According to the appraisal ESSP 2010-2015, some challenges still exist in terms of girls' academic performance and completion of school as shown in the compromise that made possible the parity. In the appraisal ESSP 2010-2015, it is argued that to achieve the education for all goal, Rwanda took the path followed by other countries as well, whereby the parity was achieved at the expenses of overlooking some concern such as retention, completion, and quality among others (for further information on that see the appraisal ESSP 2010-2015 : 11). As a result, the ESSP 2010-2015, set forth in its present objectives to challenge and address the trade-off previous made for the achievement and implementation of the EFA and MINEDUC as well as other national and international partners institutions are mobilizing efforts toward the improvement of quality in education with a special focus on girls' retention, performance, and completion.

Table1: Lower Secondary promotion, repetition and dropout rate in 2011

Indicators	Lower secondary		
	Male	Female	Overall
Promotion Rate	81.6%	80.8%	81.2%
Repetition Rate	5.5%	6.0%	5.8%
Dropout Rate	12.9%	13.2%	13.1%

Source: Education Statistic Year book 2012

The data indicate girls' dropout rate slightly higher than boys. (Balsera 2011) refers to such drop out as possibly caused by poverty. Analysed from the data one could say that there is no big discrepancy, but considering that the country's composition is that women outnumber men. Hence we can draw that girls in general outnumber boys. So if we consider this fact, the message is that we may assist a situation whereby if we observe almost equal figures, this means a big number of girls are not even attending schools. The author argues that poverty plays an important part as revealed by field research showing that although technically the 9YBE is said to be fee free in reality it is never free because there is some cost such as uniform fees, the price of meals, and schools materials that is to be paid and this become difficult to the very poor family to bear such cost. Also as noted in Huggins and Randell (2007), considerable disparities has been observed between urban and rural areas. Parallel to the economic concern, Balsera (2011) raised the issue of inadequate and low quality teaching methodology in that it is very theoretical, non-stimulating and not sensitive to gender or age differences within the classroom. Further, the teaching and learning materials are often unavailable, and the general schools infrastructures are not girls friendly.

1.3. Statement of the problem

Despite girls' empowerment through education programs that are in place in Rwanda, the inequality is still observed. From the literature review it is possible to classify causes of the observed inequality into economic and political causes as well as social causes. Balsera suggest that although in Rwanda to some extent the economic and political causes could affect both girls and boys, for girls reckon up complex social culture factors such as parents that often could privilege boys over girls when resources are scarce, the burden of cooking and caring for siblings that usually falls on girls, early marriage and teenage pregnancy also hinder girls' education. Moreover, at school level, girls' low performance can be attributed to the hidden curriculum and the attitude of teachers and church educators (Balsera 2011).

Taken altogether, achieving girls' retention and less drop out necessitate empowering the girls. Girls need to be empowered in order to be future leaders and social change makers so as to bring solution to their problems and to the problems of their society, and to become self- achieved individuals and role model in their communities. As said, a lot has been done to ensure girls attend schools. However, a lot still need to be done, because it is not enough to simply provide access to education while overlooking some factors such as the gendered childhood, the low quality of education and the socio-economic structures which might have a negative impact on the girls' drop out, completion and success in school particularly and in social life generally.

The gaps in programs for girls' empowerment intervention is what enticed my study. Given the privileged position of girls' education formulated under the rubric of girls' empowerment in global development policy, it is so surprising that little scholarly attention has been paid to project making processes of girls' empowerment through education, and particularly the dynamics through which global policy frameworks regarding gender equality in education are adopted, translated, and implemented into practical solutions by actors operating at the national level. Who are involved and are responsible for translating normative principles such as gender equality in education.

1.4. Objectives of the research

Precisely, my thesis subscribe in a new attempt towards a more comprehensive understanding of a complex program design/project , and focuses on PLAN-Aflatoun Finance and Life skills project for girls empowerment, in order to understand the specific considerations of this project design in term of girls. The majority of studies on girls' empowerment focuses on outcomes of programs or projects. While acknowledging the importance of this field of research that focus on outcomes and dedicating some time to it in my paper, this study will examine the design phase of programs that target girls, particularly within the context of Non-Governmental Interventions available to girls within the educational setting in Rwanda (PLAN-Aflatoun Finance and Life skills project is used as a case study among the NGOs interventions).

This thesis aimed to achieve the following **objectives**:

1. Assess the project's initial basis and interest in designing a project to empower girls
2. To foster research interest in the evaluation of policy/project design.

1.5. Research Questions

In order to achieve the above objectives, the study aimed to answer the following main research question:

What kinds of concepts of empowerment informed PLAN and Aflatoun's design of the Finance and Life skills Education project?

This main question can be sub-divided into four sub-questions as follows:

1. What kinds of theories of empowerment are relevant to this study?
2. How can we understand different forms of empowerment in the context of Rwandan girls in education?
3. How did PLAN-Aflatoun organize the design process in this project, and define and represent the empowerment needs of Rwandan girls in education?

4. From a feminist perspective, how can one best assess whether PLAN and Aflatoun's understandings of empowerment of girls were likely to achieve their objectives in the Rwandan context?

1.6. PLAN-Aflatoun Finance and Life skills education project in Rwanda

PLAN-Aflatoun Finance and Life skills education project in Rwanda is a partnership project between PLAN Rwanda and Aflatoun International. It is project still in the planning phase and earlier implementation. The project is planned to operate in 10 schools in 2 districts, Bugesera and Nyaruguru. An estimated total of 4,200 children at secondary level will receive financial and life skills education through the program, delivered to them within the school day by 140 teachers who will be trained in the financial and life skills curriculum and methodology (grades are senior 1 – senior 3 ages 12-15). 150 girls per year will receive financial and life skills education and begin savings and enterprise activities in dedicated holiday camps.

The programme will further enable girls to stay in school and transition through education by working with students, teachers and parents in 5 model schools to make sure that schools provide a suitable environment for girls and boys to learn in. The learnings from these model schools will then be used as the basis for lobbying the government to implement similar interventions at a national level. Within the national context, PLAN Rwanda will advocate with civil society and government in order to influence Rwanda's next Education Sector Strategic PLAN, with a view to it including requirements for schools to include gender equality and financial education actions.

The project partnership is also extended to two other local NGOs namely RWAMREC, and YWCA and the implementation of the project is the primary goal of these two organizations. The following brief introduction to each organization provide a general outline of the organization's focus on gender inequality response especially on girls and women empowerment.

PLAN International works in 50 developing countries to promote child rights. The focus is on sustainable solution to child poverty and injustice. PLAN's outlined efforts is in five core areas such as: Education, Health, Water and Sanitation, Protection, Economic Security, Emergencies, Child Participation, and Sexual Health Including HIV. In education, PLAN recognize special attention to girls given the gender injustice that denies and prevent girls from accessing decent and quality education. This commitment is clearly formulated in what is called 'PLAN's Because I am a Girl Campaign' (PLAN International). PLAN Rwanda which subject to my thesis subscribe to the same vision and mission of PLAN International (www.PLAN.org).

Aflatoun is a Dutch based organization committed to social development and financial literacy for children of ages 6 -18. Aflatoun program is used around the world and currently being introduced and used in 83 countries and with a target of attaining 120 countries using Aflatoun program by 2015. Although, Aflatoun do not make any specific distinction between boys and girls in that no formulated attention is being given to girls in the targeted children, its commitment to gender is reflected throughout the Aflatoun program whereby core elements of the curriculum are designed in a way silencing gender inequality. Furthermore, as it will be discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis, interviews with staffs have confirmed the commitment for boys and girls equality approach by Aflatoun (www.Aflatoun.org)

Young Women's Christian Associations of Rwanda (YWCA) is a Non-Government Based organization (NGO) committed to transform communities by empowering women. The organization mission is to develop leadership and collective power of women and girls in Rwanda and hence contribute to the achievement in high quality education, health and socio-economic conditions for women and girls, their families, and their communities (YWCA website).

Rwanda Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC) is a national NGO that aims at promoting gender equality and positive forms of masculinity in Rwanda and ultimately prevent gender based violence. The key focus of the organization is the promotion of positive masculinity (RWAMREC website).

These Four organizations are well versed in gender promotion and are looked to by other organizations, thus it is necessary to examine and assess their programmed contribution in the PLAN-Aflatoun Project on empowering girls.

1.7. Thesis Outline

The remainder of this thesis is outlined as follows. Chapter 2 provides the methodology used to research and reflect on the questions into study, Chapter 3 provides a brief review of relevant literature and a tentative analytical framework that will be used in Chapter 5. Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the project design process and set-up as found through organisational reports and documentation (including unpublished sources) and through fieldwork data. Chapter 5 then considers how to interpret the policy design process in relation to 'empowerment' models, returning to the central question of the study, to formulate elements of an answer. Finally, Chapter 6 draws together some general conclusions, and include some recommendations for donors, NGOs and those interested in girls' empowerment.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS AND TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

2.1. A Qualitative Case Study

The research was a qualitative research in that it entailed the use of combined data gathering and generation methods. Sources of data included interviews with different stakeholders involved in the project and for a bigger picture, top managers to technical experts and facilitators were interviewed. In addition to primary data, secondary data analysis was conducted whereby organizational and project documents as well academic literature were consulted and accessed. For more deepening on the project context, quantitative secondary sources were included.

With Development actions increasingly focused on poverty alleviation and the recognition of the negative impact of gender inequality to poverty, gender inequality is clearly a topic that need to be addressed. International organizations are mobilizing effort to address the human rights jeopardized by gender inequality in different spheres such as health, education, employment, economic, political etc... , It is important to assess what is being done or planned to be done in these areas. Policy plays an important role into the development field. Where good policy are formulated, social inequality begin to be addressed. I subscribe this research in the realm of policy analysis. Policy is defined:

“policy as a plan of action determined to influence and determine actions and other matter and make contribution to problem solving”, whereby “policy discourse shapes our understanding and defines what is within and outside the scope of possible action” (both quotes from Zina, 2004: 170).

The success of interventions response depend upon its good conception. I undertook a journey to research on interventions that are formulated toward empowering girls through education and to understand what inform the setting up of those interventions and in the process learning what works in girls’ empowerment and why. To undertake the research, the thesis relied on a case study. A case study is defined as:

“a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell 2007:73)

According to Creswell, there are different types of case studies distinct by size (individuals, a group, an entire program, or an activity), and the intent of the case analysis (single instrument case study, the collective or multiple case study, and the intrinsic case study). According to Creswell, a cases study is believed

intrinsic if the focus of the study is on the case in itself such as evaluating or studying a program because the program presents an unusual or unique situation. Other authors go further and highlight the effectiveness of the case study approach, suggesting that although intrinsically a case study may seem simply a narrative, if rigorously guided by analytical and contextualized procedures, case study-based research can be rich in providing analytical insights (Creswell 2007). It is believed that this is also the case for this research.

In Yin's argument, case studies are mostly frequently used when the research question seeks to explain some present circumstance, when one is looking to explain how or why a social phenomenon works. The inherent benefit of using case study is found in that singling the focus to a given or given phenomenon enables the researcher to discern the interactions of important factors attributable to the phenomenon. This helps the researcher to capture nuances, patterns or other less obvious characteristics that other research approaches might not otherwise catch (Berg 2009).

On the other hand, O'Leary (O'Leary 2009) argues that the challenge of using case study is the impossibility to formulate generalization. The fact that my focus throughout the whole research journey was a case study with a small study population do not allow me to make generalization and that is why I don't claim to formulate generalizations about finance and life skills being the only way to empower girls rather I aim to work within the rich context of few systematic experience, exploring the rationale behind the choice of specific interventions and constraints, within a wider existing development aid interventions.

2.2. The Choice of Case Study: a Narrative

The choice of PLAN-Aflatoun project case study was informed by two main considerations: First, the uniqueness of the finance and social education approach of Aflatoun. This relatively innovative approach to quality in education interested me, especially in light of the stated goal of girls' empowerment through assets. Second, the connection I had with Aflatoun prior to the research made it interesting to carry on investigating their mode of policy design when working with partners. I believe these two points ground my methodological strength as I build upon the profound interaction time with Aflatoun. I got involved with Aflatoun in September 2013, following one of their workshops. At that time, I was there in the quality of a translator during an Aflatoun training event, carried out as part of 'Aflateen', which is the teenagers and young people's training programme of Aflatoun. I observed their workshops in Amsterdam and this afforded me the rare opportunity to learn about their development work by listening and observing different workshop activities. Being an observant participant, rotating into different group discussions to translate and hear about their

work, I begin to become interested and to critically question how empowering their finance and social education projects really were for young girls, for example in Rwanda. Through the discussion with the program manager at Aflatoun, I learnt that they had a project that they were implementing in Rwanda, my native country. This increased my interest for learning more about their work, and from that time, I become fascinated to know more about the Aflaacademy project being implemented in Rwanda, since 2011.

Subsequently, the more I learned about the Aflaacademy project, the more I found its main objective was not the empowerment of girls, but the improvement of teachers' pedagogic methodology. Given that my immediate interest was in girls' empowerment and the fact that I was not going to do field research as part of my Masters study, I come across a new project which was still in the planning phase. I then became interested in this and inquisitively sought to research the set-up of this new project, so as to learn how girls' needs were understood by Aflatoun and its partner organisations, in terms of empowerment through education. Fortunately, my request to conduct this study was acknowledged and I started to involve the project manager, informing him of my plans, and the areas to be addressed.

My research journey started the 04/06/2014 to the 03/09/2014. This period include the time prior to the real research as it include the pre discussion with the main organization central to this research (Aflatoun). Unlike, other research, researching organizations entail a long process whereby there has to be a prior formal request for undertaking research with the organization. The organization under research has to understand and assess the focus of the research prior their acceptance to share information. Although, one of my strength was good relations that I had prior to the research, it did not means I escaped to the process, it rather meant that it served in speeding the process up a little. With the goal of having opinions of a diverse group of individuals engaged in the program, I was granted the official acceptance for carrying out the research on 24/08/2014 after a meeting between my thesis supervisor, the research and curriculum manager of Aflatoun, and I. The meeting set the tone for the research boundaries and what to expect and how I could work with Aflatoun. The research and curriculum manager of Aflatoun has been an important resource person for me throughout the research process, as he coordinated all the interviews and made them possible by putting me in contact with the people, both in Aflatoun as well as all in PLAN. Efforts to contact informants in the two Rwandan local partner organisations did not produce results, and the implications of this will be discussed later in the study.

My first non-structured interview with the Research and Curriculum Manager at Aflatoun took place on 09/08/2014 and a series of others followed, according to the availability of the interviewees. Most of the interviews conducted were with those who had been involved with the project. I got also the opportunity to interview program staff. These interview revealed to be important since

staff has practical experience as well as specific understandings of the program. In addition to program staffs, I got the opportunity to interview the Deputy Executive Director and the Head of Advocacy, Research, and Communications, they were key source of information related to organisation philosophical and strategic approaches. They were also key informant in terms of donor relations and influences as far as the project was concerned. In addition to already mentioned secondary data that were collected, the Aflatoun-PLAN project curriculum was visited. The visited documents provide information regarding the organisations' understandings of gender and its assumptions about girls' empowerment approaches. My interviews were a mix of face to face and online (skype) interviews¹. Skype interviews were used mostly when interviewing PLAN UK and PLAN Rwanda staffs.

2.3. Methodological strategies

The thesis methodological strategy entails a descriptive analysis of the setting up of the project PLAN-Aflatoun to empower girls, throughout the analysis process a conceptualization of empowerment of girls by each of the two organization will be brought to light as well as a comparison of the two organization's conceptualization of girls' empowerment (and or the related concepts they uses) with how these are viewed in the academic literature. In order word, the concepts in practice are explored with critical lens. That is why it is important to articulate a comprehensive understanding of the concepts relationships in academic literature and then last establish Aflatoun-PLAN understandings/meanings thereof for critical analytical analysis. This articulation of concepts relies on visited websites, the various organizations documents and interviews. Equally, to organize written material consulted, observed, experienced working frame work was considered and brought about the analysis of the consistency between the claim made in written resources and the actual application of the latter and I mainly used content analysis

For analysis purposes, Interviews were transcribed and then after I went through the text made notes of my first impressions, and labelled relevant different opinions, concepts or processes in other word the coding was used to record the discussion. Interviews were organized into different sections following the research questions: Concepts meanings, how does the organization learn about girls specific needs, what is the consultation and translating processes of the concept into practices, and donors influence.

¹ Online-interviews are interviews that are conducted through the use of innovative communication technologies, such as Skype, and e-questionnaires. The method is beneficial in that it allows the researcher to interview people from geographically dispersed location (Deakin and Wakefield 2013). I used the online interviews to gather data from those involved in this project that were far (PLAN UK, and PLAN Rwanda). Unfortunately, the interview with PLAN Rwanda was not that successful as expected, there was network problems. One significant issue here was that this situation was both time consuming and created discomfort to the interviewee and given that I was not able to probe much on questions, and thus this served as a limiting factor to the study.

2.4. Ethical issues and Limitations

PLAN-Aflatoun is a project that is planned to empower 150 girls per year of two districts, a small group given the numbers of girls in the whole country. Also, the project is one of many project that seek to empower girls through education. As such, the findings of this study are particular to this project and possibly to the involved organizations (PLAN, Aflatoun, WYCA, and RWAMREC) and cannot be generalized to other organizations, but possible insights regarding links can be made.

Further, a huge part of my data collection is from interviews and informal discussions with PLAN and Aflatoun staff, largely because the main focus of my research is on those who design the project for implementation. Rwandan partner organisations were not easily accessible during the research process, and therefore their views, and those of their staff, do not feature much in this study. This could be a follow-up research project; to conduct a similar study within Rwanda to elicit local views, including those of RWAMREC and YWCA, but also of teachers, girls and others. Not being able to do so has been one of the limitations that have framed the discussion around this project in the present study. Also, relying on staff may have its drawbacks when, as is often the case within any organisation, staff offer what are personal opinions, and with a tendency to praise their own organisation's achievements, especially to outsiders, and to tell a great deal about the effectiveness of their programs and strategies, and usually less about their doubts and drawbacks.

Finally, relying on organizations reporting on their work, whereas those organizations relies on donors, their reports and outcomes may have been tailored to donors philosophy or line of thought. However, with supplement of interviews I was able to probe and some truth were spoken and are presented here. By the end of the study, I felt I had had the chance to gain the trust of those I interviewed, and this reassured me that the findings were reliable, at least for this case study.

CHAPTER 3: TOOLS FOR UNDERSTANDING GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will try to present a deconstruction of the meaning of empowerment touching on the literature that shows its link with education. A theoretical framework as well the conceptualization on which this research rests on is introduced as well. All in all the chapter will contain a deconstruction of empowerment which lay the foundation for this research and as far as the theoretical framework, I draw from the ecological system theory by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) which provide an account for the assumption that a child's personality development and educational development is affected by his/her home environment. Thus, it is imperative to consider the wider environment if one want the empowerment of child. That is why a short presentation of the ecological system theory is discussed, together with some factors that affect a child's education and learning outcome. I discuss the above mentioned theme so as to help the reader understand that all aspect of a child's life development is intertwined and that in answering the main research question: "What works in girls empowerment and why?", one needs to scrutinize it from several angles, with the notion that both home and school variables contextualized to the specific country's environment of the said girls to empower are necessary for education to be a tool that impact her empowerment.

3.2. Empowerment- a review of its composition and a short deconstruction

This research is informed by the notion of the concept of empowerment that recognize the wider concerns of unequal power relations between the sexes. In different parts of the world, traditional structured relations between the sexes systematically drawbacks girls throughout their lives, giving them low status by placing a lower value on them, thereby denying and violating their rights and dignity. In the news and report on the situations of girls in different part of the world we constantly hear and see phenomena of girls' threatened life and rights such as female genital mutilation in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Mali just to name few, Girls sold off to early marriage and sex industries in Bangladesh, and India just to name few, Girls kept from school for various reason related to poverty and son preferences in India, Pakistan and other part of the world, School girls with no money resources to go to school and they therefore enter into relations with "sugar daddies" who act as sponsor to young and pay their education, Girls who faces problem of male teachers demanding sex in return for good grades and also we have to note that this kind of situation can happen at all stages of girls/women's life cycle whereby it is not unusual to encounter situation of bosses expecting sex as condition for employment promotion etc....By all means this situations remind us that at

the forefront of gender inequality is the question of unbalanced power we have to look at inequality through the lens of power and rights.

The concept of empowerment is a disputed concept so is the concept power. So we need to understand power to fully comprehend empowerment. (Rowlands 1997 cited in Luttrell 2007) distinguish between 4 types of power and their implication on empowerment' understanding. The following table 2 provide Luttrell's summary of Rowlands' work:

Table 2: Implications of different dimensions of power

Type of power relation	Implications for an understanding of empowerment
Power Over: ability to influence and coerce	Changes in underlying resources and power to challenge constraints
Power To: organize and change existing hierarchies	Increased individual capacity and opportunities for access
Power With: increased power from collective action	Increased solidarity to challenge underlying assumptions
Power from Within: increased individual consciousness	Increased awareness and desire for change

Source: Rowlands (1997)

From this illustration it is clear that the way power is conceptualized will lead to a conceptualization of empowerment in a given way which is why the concept of empowerment is widely disputed. (Rowlands 1997) add to that by saying that power and empowerment has been at the center of discussion for sometimes and he point out three distinct view of power as available in the literature starting from what he call the 'conventional' definition of power: 'Power over', the generative definition of power: 'power to', and 'power with', and to the feminist definition of power. He provide example within the development discourse, whereby the predominant approach to empowerment has been constructed on the underlying principle of the meaning of power to be 'power over' and promoting empowerment of women/girls for participation in the political and economic structures of the society as this will be a way of providing opportunity to women to occupy position of power so as to fully have a voice in economic and political decisions. Rowlands explain that this view of power imply that if power can simply be bestowed it can also be simply or easily withdrawn. Seeing empowerment in a different light than with "power over".

Thus, different academicians voiced in Rowlands (1979) entices seeing empowerment in a different light that with power over. Scientists as cited in

Rowlands' works are Nancy Hartsock (1985) and Liz Kelly (1992) on power as a process through the lens of 'power to', 'power with', and 'power from within', a power that is generative and not domination (an increase of power of A does not necessary diminish the power of B, in that a focus on processes imply working toward increasing the ability and capacity to resist and challenge the power over), the work of Foucault's analysis of power, and examples of the feminist conceptualization of power.

3.3. How power is distributed within society: Girls experience of power

In order to understand the need or rationale of girls' empowerment, we need to understand the social structure that construct the girls' identity. Situating the discussion and understanding girls as category of analysis through a gender lens, lead to a need to understand the concept gender. I draw from the academic literatures of social constructionist such as Connell and Wharton and as per their definition of gender where by it is defined as 'a social construction used to describe characteristics of girls/women and boys/men' (Connell 1987, Connell 2002, Wharton 2005). For a more understanding of gender, I refer also to sex role theory that acknowledge the impact of society on gendered identity. The sex role theory argues that through the socialization process, different sex are attributed different roles in society (Connell 1987, Eagly 1987). The authors suggest the socialization structures to be arenas such as family, school, peer group, religious institutions, and mass media and that those arena influence the growing child through numerous relations. The interactions of children girls and boys with these arena transmit to them social norms and expectations and compliance with those norms imply acceptance and rewards while non-conformity imply social exclusion and bring about negative sanctions (Connell 1987, Connell 2002, Wharton 2005).

Likewise the ecological system of human development theory that include a four layer: micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro systems as it was developed by (Bronfenbrenner 1979:21-26) inform and confirm the assumption that child's becoming is affected by his/her educational/socialization environment. As according to this theory children are nested within families, which are nested within communities, which are nested within society. All systems influence one another and play a role in responding to child maltreatment or to children's welfare. Guided by this theory we note that every aspect in children's life is interconnected. Moreover Bronfenbrenner, sees children and human beings as not passive but active individuals continuously evolving and restructuring depending on their environment's settings. For Bronfenbrenner individual influence the environment and conversely the environment influences the individuals. As according to him, we then face a development process extended to interconnections between several settings deriving from the larger environment of individuals.

3.4. How power operates in the education sector

The socialization and gender ideology is crucial for the power relations as shown in various previous example mentioned related to how girls' are treated in different spheres of life. Adding to my previous example of how power is seen in the education and employment sector, I want to add to the discussion a layer of policy level and in so doing I will be providing to the reader a wider understanding of the problem in education. According to various authors on education of girls, what is commonly advanced as justification for the importance of educating girls is seen as instrumental rather than as a right and social justice in its own and we see this both stressed in a number of reports at the international, national and in different saying at the family levels.²

As according to all the above mentioned reports, Education of girls is considered as accruing a range of benefits to countries as far as the human capital is concerned such as efficiency in achieving increased productivity and economic competitiveness & growth, improved maternal and child health and reduced fertility. Though recognizing the impact of education to all those cited benefits: Children's and infants' health, contraception and fertility, marriage age, economic autonomy, these are not straightforward in all contexts and for all levels because education in itself is not gender neutral and power neutral as echoes in the works of different scholars. For example some have argued that in some cases schools institutions reinforce the patriarchal systems, where pupils learn to obey, conform, and respect authority, and for girls in some situation education will only help girls to become a better wife or mother or even to get a good husband as the curriculum of education is sometime gender stereotyping and tend to produce "passive girls, modest and shy" (Kabeer 2005), see also (Longwe 1998: 24) in what she call "schooling". Likewise sometimes policy makers also want to see the women improving the condition of family rather than to prepare them for the equal opportunity in economy and society (Kabeer 2005).

3.5. Education for girl's empowerment

The following draws from the already raised issues related to power, socialization, and ecological systems for human development, empowerment, and education and orient the debate to the missing links in most of the edu-

²According to Murphy-Graham (2004) cited in (Murphy-Graham 2012), where she quote Lawrence Summers on the importance of education for social return, "*Judged purely as a health program, education for girls looks pretty good. Judged purely as a family planning, education for girls looks pretty good. Judged purely for reduced maternal mortality, education for girls looks pretty good. Judged as all the above, which it is, education for girls is an extraordinarily high return investment*". The question that comes into my mind when reading different reports with an instrumental rationale to girls' education is a gender concern: if education did not bring these perceived benefits, would girls not have a right to education? In addition, if what is taught to girls in school does not enable them to lead subjectively fulfilling contented lives, it is useless to try and tackle gender without tackling education itself.

education for girl's empowerment. This will allow me to introduce the next chapter providing a brief description of the PLAN-Aflatoun project as the case study of my research.

To trace origin and composition of the concept of empowerment different scholars made claims that the concept have started with the era of GAD and for some it is argued to be one of the gender planning strategies associated with GAD framework (Moser 1993), GAD, a feminist development theories that resulted from the critics of WID bloomed during the 1970's and 1980's. These approaches gained popularity and were largely limited to the work of non-governmental organizations. Rowlands (1997) on the concept of empowerment, suggest that the concept must be used in a context of oppression, since empowerment is about working to remove the existence and effects of unjust inequalities and that should be its rationale within the current development discourse, specifically with reference to women's education in what is sometimes called 'the global South'.

According to (Murphy-Graham 2008) , empowerment is still a debatable concept as many scholars are 'questioning', 'rethinking', 're-theorizing' and 'reflecting' on its meaning. She argues that the lack of proper definition of the concept, usually mislead and the concept become used as 'synonym of participation' (Murphy-Graham 2008:33). (Stromquist 1993), define empowerment as a "process to change the distribution of power both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society" (Stromquist 1993). Larzo (1993) define it as a "process of acquiring, providing, bestowing the resources and the means or enabling the access to and control over such means and resources." (Lazo 1995: 25). According to (Kabeer 2005:16) an approach to empowerment would suggest thinking about power in terms of the ability to make choices. In other words empowerment would mean having the power and ability to make choices which were denied. When reading Kabeer 1999 & 2005, we find a compelling conceptualization of empowerment which goes beyond power to include "resources, agency, and achievements" (1999, p. 435). To her it is a facilitated process by which oppressed individual acquire the ability to make strategic life choices" (1999, p. 435). Moreover, Kabeer states that "agency in relation to empowerment implies not only actively exercising choice, but also doing this in ways that challenge power relations" (2003, p. 171, cited in Schech & Vas Dev, 2008, p. 18).

Discussing the various definitions of the concept available in the literature, Murphy (2008), argues that although there is no commonly agreed definition, terms such as 'options', 'choice', 'control' and 'power' are coinciding terms often used by different scholars in defining the concept. Also referenced is the ability to 'affect one's own well-being' and 'make strategic life choices'.

Looking at the link between education and empowerment, McWhirther (1991) cited in (Rowlands 1997) offers another definition, which Rowlands uses to illustrate how empowerment works in the context of social work and education:

*“The **process** by which people, organizations or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercises this control without infringing upon the rights of others and (d) support the empowerment of others in the community”.*

On the link between education and empowerment, Kabeer argues that in the Millennium Development Goals, education is taken as an indicator among others such as employment and political participation, for positive changes in girls and women’s lives. She supports the commonly believed assumption that access to education plays a vital role in girls’ and women’s empowerment. Kabeer (2005:16) also argues that education can lead to changes in reasoning ability that is crucial to ‘women’s capacity to question, to reflect on, and to act on the conditions of their lives and to gain access to knowledge, information and new ideas that will help them to do so’. Kabeer (2005) further argues that education increases women’s capacity to impact their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their family, and positively impact the power relationships within and outside households and reduces domestic violence (Kabeer 2005:16). More importantly, (Unterhalter 2005) uses Sen and Nussbaum’s capabilities approach to explain the value of education and gender equality. To her education and gender equality has to be taken as factors for human flourishing where by one cannot be bargained for the advancement of the other.

The promotion of girls’ education in Africa has largely been enabled through the machinery, institutions and various actors within the international development community, thus, it is important to deconstruct and analyze dominant international discourse and practices in relation to girls’ education. Before moving to my case study which I use to deconstruct and analyze in depth the concept of empowerment through education, I first want to clarify the words “access” and “quality education” in greater complexities.

Access is a word jargon repeatedly found in many initiatives on girls’ education and its use is in a way that connotes that access of girls to education lead to their social and economic well-being (Unterhalter and North 2011). As if providing access to a school institution will automatically afford girls with an education that will empower them more in life. More on the discussion, (Unterhalter 1999) add that what is often ignored or left out are factors such as pedagogical content and social setting which schools provide for girls. Morrow (2007) cited in UNICEF (2009a:83), states that the word access must

stands for more than just access or enrolment. He claims that meaningful access call for schools and education systems that enables children's epistemic access, and this means access to learning and content knowledge (Morrow 2007 cited in UNICEF 2009a:83).

The need for quality education and not only promoting "access" is a point emphasized by many of the world activists. A 2002 UNICEF report had for main theme "quality education for girls". The report show that ensuring access to school to girls is praised but not enough, it is equally and even more important to ensure quality education as receiving poor quality equate to receive no education at all. The same report stresses that for girls, quality education would mean a gender sensitive and safe place for the girls to learn in combination to a relevant curriculum for girls, one that teaches girls valuable life skills reflecting the context of the nation.

The report expanded to add that the girls should be taught in a language they are familiar with and on the belief that all children can learn and by providing a quality education to girls it is not only empowering them but it will also enhance development at local and national level. See also (Save the Children (2005) *State of the World's Mothers: the Power and Promise of Girls' Education*, Save the Children (2009), *State of the world's mother's: Investing in the early years.*) on the argument supporting this point. (Stromquist 1993) on the discussion about empowerment and education, discusses the fact that empowerment through education that aim at achieving gender equality and social justice, need to use textbooks free of gender stereotypes such as the ones that identify women as men subordinate, teachers to be trained be more gender sensitive and foster gender identities. To Stromquist (1993) these elements are important and vital credentials to empowerment, but not empowerment itself.

On the other hand, as argued by (Murphy-Graham 2008) on the education can induct the empowerment process if it brings about and expands women's self-confidence, understanding and knowledge of various issues and awareness of gender equity. However, to her it is not all educational programs that brings about this. In her study, Graham argue for and claim that some aspects such as an understandable curriculum, a curriculum with practical lesson application , a learning environment where each student have individual copies of the textbooks, and the curriculum must be interdisciplinary are aspects that can triggers the empowerment process. Further, the earlier mentioned three components: knowledge, self-confidence and gender awareness need to be intertwined in a way that they complement each other (Murphy-Graham 2008).

Focusing on girls' education, one UNICEF report from 2002 suggests different factors that constitute a quality education. The report suggest that a quality education is one that provides a safe place for girls to learn, and a learning environment that is gender-sensitive, as well as a supportive family and community environment. In addition, curriculum content that teaches girls valuable life skills around health issues should also reflect the national context and values. In addition, the learners should learn in a language they are familiar with and teaching methods should be child-friendly. For UNICEF, quality means: child-centred, state-led, family-led and culturally responsive, as well as strengths- and evidence-based. What UNICEF suggests in this report is that quality education should reflect the care and protection framework of the state, and commitment from education providers and family and community, whose joint goal should be to ensure equality-friendly education for girls and boys (UNICEF , 2002).

In this chapter, the researcher has tried to provide a theoretical and analytical direction and foundation for further analysis of one collaborative NGO project aimed at securing girls' empowerment in Rwanda. Chapter 4 is a 'thick description' of decisions and discussions among partner organizations during the project design phase. Chapter 5 analyses this process in more depth and returns to the central research question. Drawing on fieldwork data, and combining data analysis with scholarly debate, these chapters aim to generate deeper insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the project's elaboration.

CHAPTER 4: DESIGNING THE CURRICULUM FOR PLAN-AFLATOUN'S FINANCE AND LIFESKILLS EDUCATION PROJECT

4.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces data from fieldwork which took place from 09/08/2014 to 03/09/2014 in Amsterdam and via skype interviews. For the purpose of clarity and efficiency in analysis, I looked at the design and development of the project into two parts: the curriculum development and design, and the project design and development. So, this chapter will focus on curriculum design as the title indicate it , while chapter five will take us through the project design process. In total, I conducted eight interviews. Interviewed staffs will not be referred to by name, but by their position in the organization as I believe it is much relevant and professional to refer to their works rather than their names but also for confidentiality aspects that need to be maintained throughout this research, I choose to proceed in such ways. I will attempt to use the interviewee's own words as much as possible, although some of the text and words are rephrased to make them more understandable.

4.2. Aflatoun's curriculum frameworks

Aflatoun's curriculum is an educational tool believed to be innovative in nature for its potential to equip the child with the capacity to become substantial adult. Moreover, the Child social and finance education program is a recent initiative supported by international, UN agencies and some multinational agencies and one particular to name is the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). At the UNICEF website they present child social finance education in the following sentences:

"(CSFE) aims to inspire children to be socially and economically empowered citizens by equipping them with the skills and knowledge to become active agents capable of transforming their communities and societies. CSFE provides children with a holistic learning experience that embraces knowledge and skills harnessed from both inside and outside the classroom." (UNICEF 2012: 3)

Moreover, the Research and Curriculum Manager interviewed, explained to me that their approach subscribe or resemble to the Article 29 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The same argument holds true to what is again explained at the UNICEF website when providing the rationale of social and finance education:

The approach is in accord with the Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 1 on article 29 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), which states that "education ... goes far beyond formal schooling to embrace the

broad range of life experiences and learning processes which enable children, individually and collectively, to develop their personalities, talents and abilities and to live a full and satisfying life within society” (UNICEF 2012:3).

4.3. Curriculum design and development process

As previously described the PLAN-Aflatoun Rwanda project is a project planned to involve two additional local partners’ organizations: RWAMREC and YWCA. Due to time constraints, I did not manage to get in touch with the two local partners. The following is a narration of what was explained to me as being the process in regards to the curriculum setting up and design.

It worth noting that although the project of my case study is a partnership between PLAN and Aflatoun as well some local partners, Aflatoun maintained the lead in terms of design and development of the curriculum on finance and life skills. This is why most of the views in the curriculum on finance and life skills reflect the views of Aflatoun staff, with only a few inputs from PLAN International and PLAN Rwanda, whose views were reflected in some modifications made, but not in developing the original curriculum.

As per the interview conducted with Aflatoun staff, I understood the curriculum design process to be the following. Aflatoun, as an organization started its operational programs in 2005 under the Amsterdam secretariat and since then the organization’s own view is that it has had a successful record of achievements to date. As an existing organization, Aflatoun have regular program evaluations aimed at improving their programs and being able to improve their service delivery for their partners. They have what they call mid-term evaluations, and it was on the basis of their mid-term evaluation conducted in 2011 that I draw data to illustrate how consultation and decision-making was organized when it came to designing the curriculum and negotiating the project design process.

It is perhaps significant to note that the curriculum the researcher discusses is not an exclusively Rwandan curriculum, designed specifically for the country. Instead, Aflatoun develop curriculum that are generic, and then adapt them to what they see as the context of a specific country, something I discuss further on, especially in Chapter 5 and 6. My research was carried out at a very opportune point in time, when Aflatoun was just completing the task of changing their curriculum from one model to another. So it was interesting to be able to observe this process ‘from the sidelines’, through documentation and through interviewing staff while the process was still fresh in their mind (the curriculum volume appeared in 2013). On the basis of the interviews conducted, combined with document analysis, the process for changing the curriculum was intended to be as consultative as possible.

This report was commissioned with two aims: first, evaluating the development process and design process of a curriculum and the second, evaluating the existing program implementation of Aflatoun across the globe, and thus generating suggestions for best practices in work with the NGO's partners (present and future). We have to note that the first pilot curriculum did not go through this process of a consultative mid-term evaluation. I will be focused on the process of designing and developing of the recently new curricula because the implementation of the PLAN-Aflatoun project will use it.

The report explain that the consultative process for the design and development of the new curriculum involved 9 partners. Note that at the time of the report's completion, 60 partners' organizations to Aflatoun had started the implementation of Aflateen³ in 42 countries. The collected data was through field visit, emails, skype interviews, workshops, online survey and review of commissioned reports of the pilot partners. Findings in the report confirm that consulted partners appreciated that they were involved in the process and could contribute although they mentioned that the consultation process could have been improved and they express the wish for much time allocated to this consultation process and most notably the involvement many national stakeholders and the end users (youth) which is needed. Language issue was also a constraint expressed by the interviewed partners that were consulted (See Aflatoun, Mid-term Evaluation Report 2011).

The consultation process as reported in the mid-term evaluation report of 2011, was confirmed by staffs interviewed as well. I have been told that contrary to the first curriculum (the pilot curriculum), this new curriculum development was an open one to the best possible as it involved consultation with partners. However as according to the Research and Curriculum Manager interviewed, they recognized that only few of their partners were involved and also voices of children and youth may not be sufficiently captured as they got their views through their teachers. In the words of the Research and Curriculum Manager interviewed:

"We did not have very much impact assessment at that stage of revision, so that is one of the thing we are trying to improve even with the AFLATOT⁴ process as well. We did have some research though in that we had requested that partners do focus group and interviews with the children that are taking part with teachers and so on. They brought that information back to us" (Interview, Amsterdam, 09/08/2014).

³ A curriculum for older teenagers/young adults was successfully piloted in 2011 and is designed for educators, facilitators or youth peer-to-peer mentors. (www.aflatoun.org)

⁴ Aflatot is a child social and finance education programme aimed at toddlers aged 3 to 6 (See www.aflatoun.org)

Additionally, the Research and Curriculum Manager recognized that even if they got suggestions and comments from partners, Aflatoun did not necessarily changed everything and incorporated everything as suggested. To quotes his words: *"We have not necessarily changed all the things but we have been working toward that end"* (Interview, Amsterdam, 09/08/2014).

Besides the consultation process, Aflatoun tries to contextualize and connect their curricula with the local context by creating book for every continent and adapted to regional context. Thus, acknowledging the fact that continents are not homogenous, Aflatoun reserve the option for local contextualization and motivate its partners NGO's implementing at the local level to own the contextualization by considering the social and cultural context in which the inhabitants of the country live. Added to the contextualization is the participation that Aflatoun encourages to its partners so that they undertake activities that reflect local life. When implemented as per the local context the children are able to practice real skills contextualized to their own environment (Aflatoun, *Children and Change* 2010: 15). To Aflatoun, it is important that its partners take ownership of the contextualization and for that Aflatoun developed a contextualization manual. The conceptualization manual of Aflatoun underlines the importance of adapting the curriculum to the needs of the partner's country, while maintaining the implementation of Aflatoun's core ideas and methods and setting to reach its goals. For Aflatoun, the contexts that are important to include in the local curriculum for its contextualization are the political, socio-economic, community context, and programmatic context (Aflatoun *Contextualization Manual* 2005: 20).

The narrated is the process of designing and changing the curriculum and as according to the findings from the interview, PLAN International and PLAN Rwanda are to lead the coordination and overseeing of the contextualization. The findings revealed that in addition to finance and life skills of Aflatoun, PLAN wanted to add an exclusive gender component and for that they have an exclusive gender program on the ground that has sexual reproductive health and various other gender topics and this will be combining with the Aflatoun's curriculum and the merging and compiling of the curriculum imply that overlapping subject were removed.

4.4. The educational content

The strength of Aflatoun's curriculum is that it is a child friendly curriculum that holds dear the principles and practices of child rights. Tightly linked to Aflatoun's aim of empowering children, is their formulated theory of change⁵ that comprises five core elements: *"Personal Exploration, Rights and*

⁵ See Appendix E on Aflatoun's Theory of Change.

Responsibilities, Saving and Spending, Planning and Budgeting, Social and Financial Enterprise” (www. Aflatoun.org). As according to interviewed staff, these five core elements are what Aflatoun envision children learners need to learn in order to become socially empowered and economically empowered. According to Aflatoun, children are knowledgeable and multi-faceted, and able to respond to and act upon the many challenges that confront their society and bring positive social change (see Aflatoun Children and Change 2011:13). The Research and Curriculum Manager, the Programme Manager (Anglophone Africa), and the Programme Manager (Francophone Africa) each expressed the same views in relation to Aflatoun’s programmes and methods. They confirmed that their programme is children centred where by children in the programmes work together and learn from each other. Children’s participation in the programme is important and Aflatoun’s partners are constantly encouraged to undertake activities reflecting local life for children to practice skills in their own environment.

The focus of my research is girls’ empowerment and this meant my interviews focused mainly on girls, rather than boys. I asked how Aflatoun conceives and views the content of their educational curriculum and its importance for girls’ empowerment. In response, I was told that Aflatoun’s approach is to not consider girls as a separate group and rather to investigate girls’ specific needs in terms of an education that can spark their empowerment in the same ways they aim at boys’ empowerment as well. To quote the answer given from one interviewee: *“We don’t as an organization get into what are the needs of girls specific to countries such as Rwanda, East Africa or elsewhere, because we don’t have that level of context expertise”* (Research and Curriculum Manager, Interview, Amsterdam, 09/08/2014). However, he went on explaining that for this project, PLAN International and PLAN Rwanda strongly believe that girls should be financially empowered. Thus the need to provide them with ‘finance skills’. I quotes his words: *“PLAN, call our program finance and life skills education”* (Research and Curriculum Manager, Interview, Amsterdam, 09/08/2014). One member of the NGO’s staff explained how this might work in practice:

“...for example we tried to thinking of how to position the girls and boys (switch roles between the boy and the girls), the girls take the traditional roles of boys and vice versa. In the curriculum you see the girls as the outgoing one doing a lot of activities, coordinating Aflatoun activities, taking initiatives, and the boys are doing household chores (Programme Manager- Anglophone Africa, Interview, Amsterdam, 09/08/2014).

Regarding the researcher’s analysis of the process of curriculum design and development, the interest of the researcher was to understand how the project contextualise the content while making sure that it benefit and empower the Rwandan girls in the programs. The finding revealed that at the

global and regional level, the contextualisation tried to ensure and consider the gender dimension whereby gender-sensitive sentences and scenarios which aim to breach usual general stereotypes frequently appear in the curriculum. The researcher's position on that is that sometimes, it is difficult to implement a general education programme on regional and local level because of cultural differences the methods used could be quite controversial, and teachers might not find them acceptable. I draw from Taylor and Mulhall (1997) to argue for the importance of contextualising the learning. The thinking behind using such examples to gender stereotypes was explained by one interviewee as follows:

“The curriculum even has a part where the girls make fun of the boys who are doing household chores and from there the teachers and parents take the opportunity to discuss further on the subject and breach stereotypes....” (Programme Manager- Anglophone Africa, Interview, Amsterdam, 09/08/2014).

More examples on how the curriculum breach stereotypes in terms of labour market is seen in how the curriculum connect children in the program to different views: an example in use is of the bank where we see a women assuming the duty of the bank manager and providing information about loan while a man assuming the position of clerk (ibid.). The programme Manager of Aflatoun in narrating this, he suggested to me that, this in the mind of students, could be motivational because when girls go to the bank and meet a bank manager who is a women, they become inspired to imagine that if another female can make it, so can they. *Vice versa*, there are some activities or types of work that boys do not think they can assume, and through the messages in the curriculum, they may come to see that they can after all consider some of these kinds of activities, in spite of them not being ‘usual’ stereotypical occupations for males.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSING THE PROJECT DESIGN PROCESS: TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS IN RWANDAN SCHOOLS?

5.1. Introduction

In this final chapter before the Conclusion, I will describe and analyze the key findings around the project design process of the project PLAN-Aflatoun, through voices of staffs of Aflatoun, PLAN International and PLAN Rwanda. The aim is to give meaning to a set of data collected through contacts, examining reports, holding informal discussions and conducting interviews. I then move to the last chapter which will be the conclusion of my research and which includes a few tentative recommendations.

5.2. Project and Policy

Policy discourse shapes our understanding, defines, and delimits our scope of possible action. Actions framed through the lens of policy decisions have a significant impact on society, on the lives of people who comprise it and on the environment in which they interact. Given, that said impact of policy on the lives of people, it is crucial and important to understand the means by which policy decisions are reached, or in other words to understand the policy making process. (Monkman and Hoffman 2013) recognize the importance of policy understandings in shaping projects and action. The authors argues that uncritically the way we frame the problem is likely going to be the way we formulate our focus of action. The author uses the example of girls' education and argues that the way we discursively frame it is the way we are likely to provide solutions. For those who frame girls education as a problem of access to schools will likely increase efforts in enrollment while those who recognize the issues of social structures constraining and determining who attend schools, why and how education is important, and what is taught, they will likely prioritize a solution that deal and engage with those more complex social processes and their consequences in girls education.

Arguably, Power and influences are factors to not forget when we thing of policy. In addition, policy is political in that it is the power to determine what is done. It is in that line of thoughts that I argue that projects are formulated in lines of given discourses or lens. Within the education sector, we faces policies that determines who benefits, what is education for? and who pays and decide? It is important to consider and recognize that educational policy or purposes is decisively shaped by the wider environment which include the power in the global arenas as well as the power relations locally. More certainly, the policy impacts decisively and shape public institutions, NGOs, as well as other national movements or the wider civil society. These

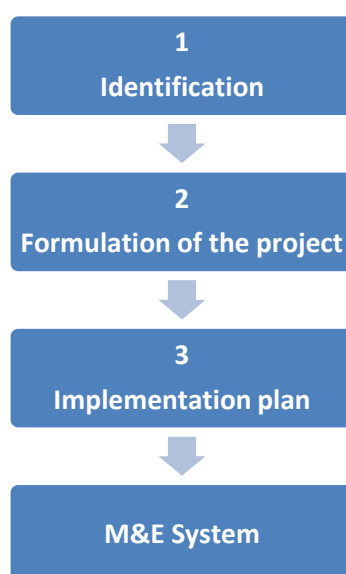
different organization and institutions are identified as important forces translating gender equality in education knowledge and action at the country level.

More specifically, using a critical feminist lens the following part narrate and analyses the development of PLAN-Aflatoun, attention is paid on the dynamics through which the project was developed. I will attempt to answer two of my sub questions: How did PLAN-Aflatoun organize the design process in this project, and define and represent the empowerment needs of Rwandan girls in education? And, from a feminist perspective, how can one best assess whether PLAN and Aflatoun's understandings of empowerment of girls were likely to achieve their objectives in the Rwandan context? Resounding in this presentation of findings and analysis will be how empowerment through education is constructed and used by different policy or project actors and how these inform and shape the level of talk, engagement and actions.

5.3. Getting to understand the design process of PLAN-Aflatoun' Finance and Life skills project

As per the ILO's manual on project design, it is argued that project get their rationale in the existence of problems affecting a certain group in the community and the justification of the said problem call for the needs for intervention through projects and programs (ILO, 2010). In others words needs in the community ground policies, projects, and actions. ILO argues that a sustainable development project is one that is coherent and subscribe to the global development policy and its objectives are aligned integrally with policies and resolutions adopted and enacted by the state. In other words, the project has to align with priorities and action plan at the national level as well as the global. According to ILO, a project cycle has generally five phases: *"the design phases, the appraisal phase, the submission and approval, the implementation and monitoring, and the final evaluation"* as illustrated in this paper (See in Appendices, Appendix B). According to the same manual, the design which is the focus of my research involves a process of analysis the situation aimed at identifying the problems or needs, and once problems have been identified, then the formulation of strategy and structures for actions follows as well as preparing the implementation plan and planning of the M&E system. The manual suggests four subsequent steps for a good and simple project design phase as illustrated in the following figure 1.

Figure 1: Project design process



Concerning the identification of the problem or needs, it has been argued that this process has to be participatory and consultative as possible. The research found that in terms of needs of the girls PLAN- international and PLAN-Rwanda was the leading on that process, as previously mentioned, Aflatoun as an organization do not think of girls as a separate group hence, there is no specific focus to girls' needs. Indeed, the Senior Corporate Partnerships Executive for PLAN UK, argued that the identification of girls' needs in terms of this specific project of PLAN-Aflatoun to be implemented in Rwanda, draws from what was already identified through the program because 'I am a girl'. That program was elaborated to take into consideration and address what was found out as girls' unique barriers in terms of completing secondary and meaningful education needed to become empowered. The program set to work toward identifying the range of assets that girls need at specific life stages so as to be empowered and able to make life choices and exercises their rights meaningfully. Because, 'I am a girl' theory of change is what the project draws from (Senior Corporate Partnerships Executive for PLAN UK., Skype Interview, 27/08/2014)

In terms of local participation and consultation, the program manager in charge of education at PLAN Rwanda when interviewed explained to me that in addition to what PLAN international has identified globally as being girls' needs in empowerment through education, at local level they are informed by needs and problems put forward in the country's national strategic plan and they engage discussion with the district authority of the district they are planning intervention for and gather needs and problems that need to be addressed. In his words: *"PLAN Rwanda is operating in three districts: Gatsibo, Bugesera and Nyaruguru,*

we started working in Gatsibo because it was seen as a poor district with poor families where you find more vulnerable children. Then we expanded our work to Bugesera. Off-course going to Bugesera was also a discussion with the province authorities in terms of needs in literacy and in terms of Childs challenges/poverty issues. And recently two years ago we also opened an office in the Nyaruguru in the southern province.” (Programme manager in charge of education, 03/09/2014).

In regards to the formulation of the project, as I understood, PLAN conceived the project, established objectives, and output as well as the outcomes to achieve. But in the process, they were requested by the donor (Credit Swiss) to involve Aflatoun. Obviously, with the inclusion of Aflatoun, the project some changes took place. Two additional local partners are also involved as well and they will contribute as per their given areas of expertise. I was curious to understand what PLAN believes and hoped to be the contribution of Aflatoun’s Finance and Life skills program and why Aflatoun and not any other finance and life skills program on the ground. And on that I was answered that: *“why Aflatoun for this particular projects?, it is because credit Suisse has identified them as partners. I don’t have information to base my comparison but I think plan have experience in working with aflatoun and particularly their life skills and financial education is quite in line with what plan does. Broadly we are interested and positive about aflatoun approach but not to the exclusion of other partners”* (the Senior Corporate Partnerships Executive for PLAN UK. 27/08/2014). She added that *“One of the four types of assets that are mentioned in because I am a girl, that plan recognize as being part of the spectrum that girls need to be empowered, is the financial asset. So financial literacy and financial education is not quiet a developed areas for us and that is why we partner or works with aflatoun.”* the Senior Corporate Partnerships Executive for PLAN UK. 27/08/2014).

This answer was the same I heard from Interview with Aflatoun as well. However, all the interviewees recognized that PLAN and Aflatoun had relationship through other partnership in other countries where they both operates. To sort get a better understanding on the collaboration of the two organizations and how the girls needs were considered, I probed with a question on the divergences that they two organizations could have had when putting together the project and PLAN assured me that Aflatoun program is in line as well with the needs of girls identified by PLAN except in the areas of SHR. I quote the Senior Corporate Partnerships Executive for PLAN UK,: *“a top line to that : where plan has so much emphasis and where it is somehow lacking in Aflatoun programs is in gender equality and in particular SHR... and those the areas we are sort developing in Aflatoun project because we think it underdeveloped areas”* (27/08/2014)

On the implementation plan, PLAN-Rwanda will coordinate activities on the ground and they will use Aflatoun Curriculums (which I already discussed its design process in chapter four) while RWAMREC will bring its particularity in terms of working with boys for positive change. I quote: *“RWAMREC will*

work on Positive masculinity through what they call boys for change clubs. They will be in charges of Gender equality within schools. Run those boys for change clubs, mentor the teachers, run event in the community and peer (with a boy change curriculum). In other words, the boys with their family and friends to sort buying this full concept of boys change” (Programme manager in charge of education, 03/09/2014). And YWCA will bring in the project *“an approach of follow your dream which an engagement with girls to think about their dreams and what they can do to achieve their dreams and begin to do that at an early stage. So RWAMREC is working with boys and YWCA with girls, it is a mixes so that u understand that we are not working with a single sex”* (Business Development Specialist. 03/09/2014). On the monitoring and evaluation system of the project, I did not ask question on that regards, and I will not comment on that in this research.

5.4. Toward empowerment of girls: discussion and analysis

I now enter into a discuss of the main findings presented in this chapter and the previous one based on the background and the theoretical framework presented in chapter three, attempting to answer the main research question of this study: What works in girls empowerment and why? Attempting to answer a multifaceted and complicated question like this is not easy. Furthermore, the background information provided on Rwanda’s education/girls’ empowerment through education and other themes discussed in chapter two and three showed us that many factors enter into play when we think of an education situation that empower the girls child, and to be able to account comprehensively for what works in girls empowerment, one need to investigate the topic from different angles. And in the Rwandan context, I say it is not simply a question of access to education, it is a question of learning environment, the content of education, and the gender structures constraints. To that end and in the quest of what works, I set the discussion and analysis in a way that tease out how the project conceptualize the latter, plus engaging the discussion against the previously mentioned ecological system of human development theory of Bronfenbrenner (1995), and the frameworks of empowerment as elaborated by the researcher: participatory, Contextualized and multi-dimensional by trying to give an account of the different aspects involved. I hope that throughout the discussion in this session an explanation for why I have chosen to orient my discussion in this angle will resonate.

5.4.1. A review of empowerment as a concept *vis-à-vis* education for empowerment

As stated earlier the concept of empowerment is used and framed differently from both the context and policy angles in which it is being used. To operationalize the concept to best suit the purpose of this research, I use the interpretation of empowerment from the works of Rowlands (1997) and use also aspect of Murphy Graham (2008) and Stromquist (1993).

Rowlands (1997) give an account of three dimensions of how empowerment is to be experienced: personal, rational and collective. The dimension of personal development best suit with what I found to be the Aflatoun's theory of change which inform the philosophy behind the development of their curriculum. In Rowlands (1997), empowerment on a personal level entails developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, while empowerment at the rational level entail the individual who gained the confidence is now able to positively influence her/his environment and the empowerment at the collective level imply that individual work together to bring about a positive impact. I relate this to the Aflatoun Approach in that their theory of change embrace most of the said. Two of Aflatoun's core elements of its theory of change: "personal exploration" and "Rights & Responsibility" are much leading to Rowlands dimension of empowerment. As previously mentioned in my findings, Aflatoun as an organization believe in children's ability to bring positive social change, starting with themselves and the people in their community. Moreover, Children in the programme work together so that they can learn from each other and learn to work together (Aflatoun Children and Change 2012: 6). An example that I was given during the interview is related to how children are empowered individually and then work as a group on a given social enterprise which aim to bring positive change in the community. The example was of Children in Aflatoun program in Peru who recognized the importance of having a national identity card for students and went partnering with the local government officials and were able to get around 300 students at the school to receive IDs from the government and at no cost (Programme Manager- Francophone Africa, Interview, Amsterdam, 20/08/2014).

Similar to Murphy Graham (2008) and Stromquist (1993), the element of psychology that we need to pay attention and engage with in a way that we do not create a situation of disempowerment but rather create empowerment through facilitating the process of self-esteem and confidence so that one feels in control of one's life is important and in line with what Aflatoun together with PLAN are working toward with the project. The curriculum developed has a specific gender component that breach stereotypes. Going back to Stromquist (1993), his elaboration on the psychological element entails that women and girls develop feelings and belief their capacity and ability to bring about change in their life. And this is something children who takes part of the Aflatoun program do. They are allowed to think outside the box. The lessons plan are planned in a way that provide room for children to think creatively and engage in a discussion. Teachers in the programs receive trainings prior to the program on how to engage and make sure that they breach gender stereotypes. And in that process girls learn problem solving skills and get to believe that they as well can change their personal life and their environment. Stromquist's understanding of empowerment propose two more elements such as the economic and political aspects which I want to touch on briefly against the Rwandan context and suggest a

further study for that. I suggest, we think of a girl who envision economic empowerment for her future, have dreams of well paid jobs and who may faces structural social hindrances and political and we have to acknowledge that the social-cultural and political environment change gradually not in one day. That is why I suggest to look at the wider impact of the economic and political aspect in a more detailed and impact assessment study.

However, it is noteworthy to note that Aflatoun is aware that in some social culture settings of some countries it is not appropriate for children to have autonomy especially girls and this become difficult for them to practices the finance skills of the program. And for that Aflatoun prior to the program engage also with the community.

After many reading on empowerment and despite varied definition in use by academicians and researchers, I found Mc Whirther cited in Rowlands (1995) very appealing to our discussion in empowerment through education. Mc Whirther found in Rowlands (1997) call for a differentiation between a “situation of empowering” and an “empowering situation”. Mc Whirther cited in Rowlands (1997) argues that a “situation of empowering” is where individuals are aware of power dynamics in their environment, individual have developed and acquired skills and capacity to fully control and bring about positive change in their lives, individual’s know their rights and rights of others, and individual bring positive change in their community whereas an “empowering situation” is when one or more of the above for conditions found in a situation of empowerment is being developed, but where the rest are not (Rowlands,1997).

More on empowerment as seen in the literature, is that it is a process that start at the individual level. My curiosity throughout the research lead me to understand that Aflatoun focus much and take the approach of the individual level of children. While I understood, PLAN’s empowerment approach to focus at both the individual and the collective. The combination of these two empowerment approach is beneficial to the girls. If I may refer to the ecological system theory of interconnected system, where empowerment is or could be seen as an interactive process, where elements in a larger system are connected and influence each other, it is imperative for Aflatoun to engage with the wider system and move beyond the individual. For example, the children’s primary contact and direct contact is what Bronfenbrenner call the microsystem as it is an immediate, small environment of the children and we found individuals such as family or care givers, schools teachers and all those individuals interact with the children and influence children’s blossoming and growth. The more nurturing, motivational and encouraging these relationships are the better the nurturing the children will become. Further to that Bronfenbrenner suggest a mesosystem which is how these different individuals part of the children’s microsystem work together to ensure the nurturing of the children. At the exosystem level, we find other people and an environment in children’s life that the children themselves

do not interact often but who still influence indirectly children's development and those are for examples extended family member, parents 'workplaces, the neighborhood, and so on. The macro-system level which is the final level of the Bronfenbrenner's theory encompass things such as freedom and rights of children, cultures values, the country' economy or global etc. as thing that can negatively or positively affect the children's growth.

Recalling the way the project is planned to involve the wider community starting by children themselves in the program (both boys and girls), Teachers, Parents (both mothers and fathers) and the community, I argues that the project has if implemented as planned is potentially going to impact on children in general and girls 'empowerment specifically. Nevertheless, the researcher critically raise the issue of lack of local **participation** of the children in question in terms of determining their needs for their empowerment through education. Another aspect that the researcher find important is the contextualization. Recalling the **contextualization** approach by Aflatoun and PLAN, it is difficult to assume that busy and unmotivated teachers will take the ownership of changing that not to mention the low salary of teacher in Rwanda which may act up keeping low their motivation. The fact that this is an extra to the national curriculum, Aflatoun and PLAN tried to ease the burden of teachers by scheduling activities in a way that not add up extra time to teachers. And the fact that some activities will be carried out by the two other organization will reduce teachers' workload. Another last aspect is the **multi-dimensional** programs, I recall that, through the EFA program and given the government's good will, girl's education and empowerment is on the right track in Rwanda, though there is need for a quality education and that is what I found interesting with this project. It is a project that not only bring into a new aspect into children education: the finance aspect and life skills, but its SRH education is very important to young girls and boys. In other words the combination of all those different aspects of contents make it multi-dimensional

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1. Key Findings

This chapter synthesizes the main findings and conclusions of the study, and makes a few possible recommendations. In wrapping up the findings of this study, documentation and interview material, combined with scholarly analysis, revealed that within the educational sphere of the girl child, she is not on her own. She requires safe, motivational, and trusting relationships that can support her within her social ecosystem, and others in positions of trust, who can understand and provide solutions for the good of both the girl and boy child. The conclusion asks: is this ensured in the way that this particular PLAN- Aflatoun project was planned?

In line with this, the study has strongly suggested that aiming for girls' empowerment in Rwanda, without fully appreciating the way in which project outcomes are affected at local levels by people's own expectations, norms and practices, makes little sense. For this reason, the researcher's conclusion is that both conceptualization and operationalization of empowerment through development intervention in the form of projects in education, requires that at least the three following elements be present:

- (i) First, a certain degree of participation of the targeted group so as to better understand and define their needs to be present in the pedagogical framework in the educational arena. This means that they have to be involved in both the decision related to the educational content and how the content is structured.
- (ii) Second, contextualization is also needed, both at the stage of curriculum development and in the process project development and design, so that all the significant people and institutions in the girls' ecosystem can be engaged to help construct and ensure a receptive and positive learning environment for the girls. This contextualization, in line with this study, would certainly help to facilitate the absorption and understanding of the educational content by girls who are the object of NGO empowerment efforts.
- (iii) Third, multi-dimensionality should help to provide skills and knowledge that girls can actually make use of as a vehicle for their own positive life changes, whether for themselves alone or also for their families and the wider society.

The conclusion of this study is that if NGOs like Aflatoun wish to be empower girls through introducing new curricula in the education system, then

to enable this kind of intervention to be properly evaluated and to achieve its full potential as an instrument of social change, it would be helpful if these three elements were included.

6.2. Tentative recommendations

1. The NGOs involved in project design and planning should ensure that there are always mechanisms for the direct voices of children, especially girls, to be incorporated into the planning process, through formal inputs and needs assessment studies on the ground.
2. The NGOs and Government should ensure that the local community's involvement in aid projects like this one, is not only to check the final proposals, but also to be involved from an earlier stage in conceptualization, design and planning of curricula and related interventions, so that they have a sense of ownership and understand the need to empower girls through education and training.

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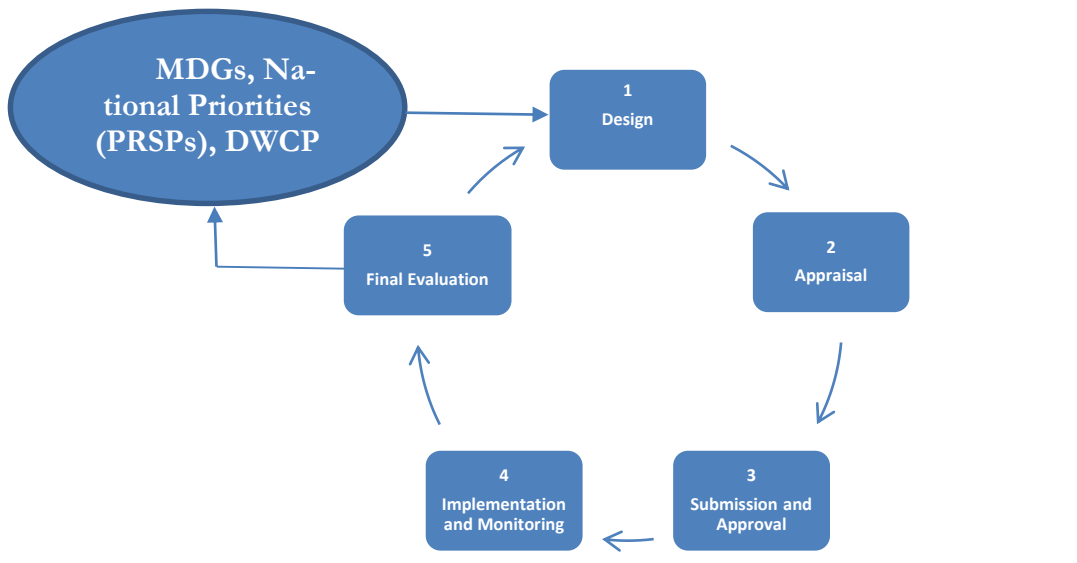
List of Appendices

Appendix A: Number of secondary lower level education student and staff from 2008 to 2012

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total students	288,036	346,518	425,587	486,437	534,712
Male	150,221	176,639	209,926	235,750	255,503
Female	137,815	169,879	215,661	250,687	279,209
<i>% of Male</i>	<i>52.2%</i>	<i>51.0%</i>	<i>49.3%</i>	<i>48.5%</i>	<i>47.8%</i>
<i>% of Female</i>	<i>47.8%</i>	<i>49.0%</i>	<i>50.7%</i>	<i>51.5%</i>	<i>52.2%</i>
Lower secondary students	183,284	235,527	298,799	341,742	352,796
Male	92,938	117,269	144,168	162,320	164,362
Female	90,346	118,258	154,631	179,422	188,434
Upper secondary students	104,752	110,991	126,788	144,695	181,916
Male	57,283	59,370	65,758	73,430	91,141
Female	47,469	51,621	61,030	71,265	90,775
Gross Enrolment Rate	20.7%	25.9%	31.5%	35.5%	38.0%
Male	22.0%	26.8%	31.5%	34.9%	37.0%
Female	23.4%	25.0%	31.5%	36.2%	40.0%
Net Enrolment Rate	13.9%	13.2%	22.6%	25.7%	28.0%
Male	13.8%	12.8%	21.6%	24.2%	26.0%
Female	13.9%	13.7%	23.7%	27.2%	30.0%
Transition Rate	86.0%	90.2%	93.8%	95.9%	
Male	85.2%	88.7%	92.8%	97.8%	
Female	86.9%	91.6%	94.7%	94.0%	
School staff	10,187	14,426	14,477	20,522	23,335
Male Staff	7,691	10,324	10,600	14,818	16,936
Female Staff	2,496	4,102	3,877	5,704	6,399
<i>% of Male Staff</i>	<i>75.5%</i>	<i>71.6%</i>	<i>73.2%</i>	<i>72.2%</i>	<i>72.6%</i>
<i>% of Female Staff</i>	<i>24.5%</i>	<i>28.4%</i>	<i>26.8%</i>	<i>27.8%</i>	<i>27.4%</i>
Qualified Teachers	5,849	8,710	8,681	13,206	15,748
<i>% of qualified Teachers</i>	<i>57.4%</i>	<i>60.4%</i>	<i>60.0%</i>	<i>64.4%</i>	<i>67.5%</i>
Qualified Male Teachers	4,593	6,786	6,226	10,000	12,051
<i>% of qualified Male Teachers</i>	<i>59.7%</i>	<i>65.7%</i>	<i>58.7%</i>	<i>67.5%</i>	<i>71.2%</i>
Qualified Female Teachers	1,256	1,924	2,455	3,206	3,697
<i>% of qualified Female Teachers</i>	<i>50.3%</i>	<i>46.9%</i>	<i>63.3%</i>	<i>56.2%</i>	<i>57.8%</i>
Students: teacher ratio	28:1	24:1	29:1	24:1	23:1
Students: Qualified teacher ratio	49:1	40:1	49:1	37:1	34:1
Schools	689	1,208	1,399	1,362	1,466

Source: Education Statistic Year book 2012

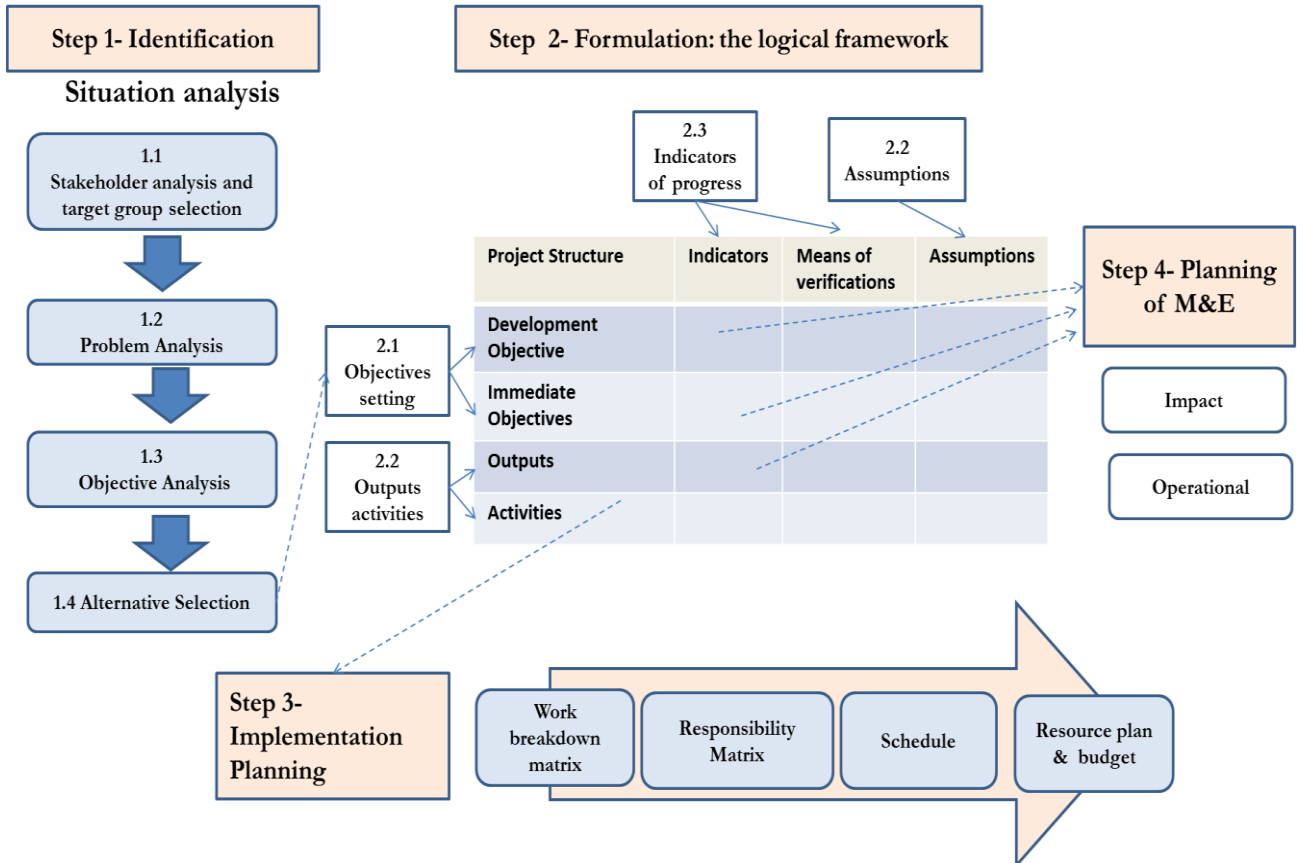
Appendix B: Five phases of the project cycle



Source: ILO

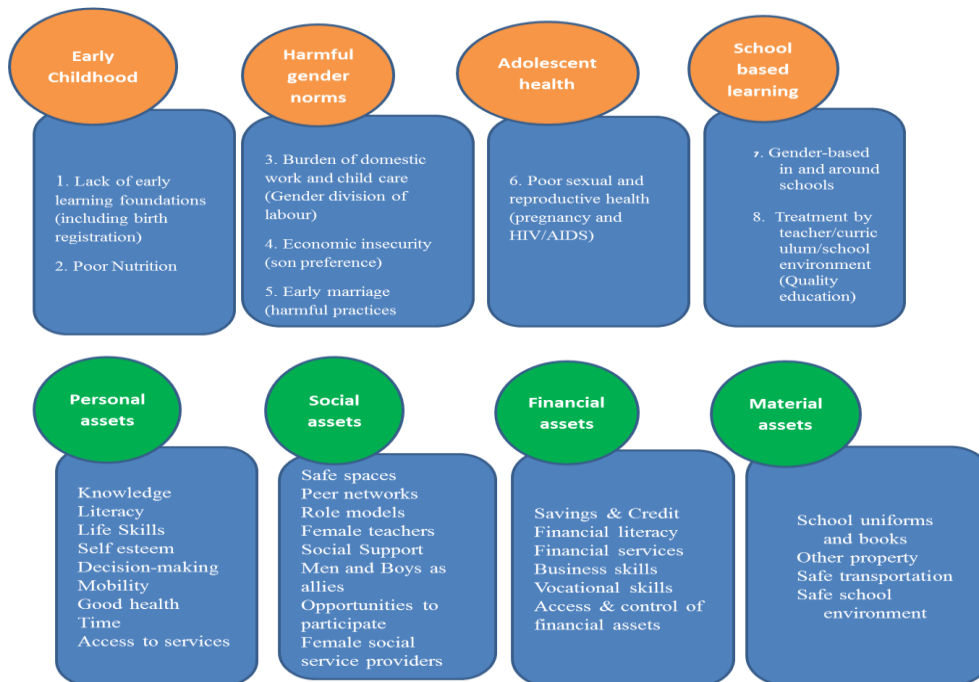
Appendix C: Project Design Steps
 (Source: ILO)

Project Design Steps



Appendix D: PLAN International's Theory of Change

BIAAG Campaign



Source: <http://plan-international.org/>

Appendix E: Aflatoun's Theory of Change

SOURCE: WWW.AFLATOUN.ORG

