



Meaning of Deaf Empowerment

Exploring Development and Deafness in Namibia

Íðunn Ása Óladóttir

Lokaverkefni til MA-gráðu í þróunarfræðum

Félagsvísindasvið



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Meaning of Deaf Empowerment
Exploring Development and Deafness in Namibia

Íðunn Ása Óladóttir

Lokaverkefni til MA-gráðu í þróunarfræðum
Leiðbeinendur: Davíð Bjarnason og Jónína Einarsdóttir

Félags- og mannvísindadeild
Félagsvísindasvið Háskóla Íslands

Júní 2014

Ritgerð þessi er lokaverkefni til MA-gráðu í þróunarfræðum og er óheimilt að afrita ritgerðina á nokkurn hátt nema með leyfi rétthafa.

© Iðunn Ása Óladóttir 2014

Reykjavík, Ísland 2014

Abstract

Empowerment is a recent and a popular concept within international development studies which emphasizes people-centered approaches where the beneficiaries in developing countries are seen as active participants rather than merely being passive recipients of aid. The aim of this research is to explore the influence of development programs on empowerment of Deaf individuals based a fieldwork that took place in Namibia from September to October 2012 through the Centre for Communication and Deaf Studies (CCDS) in Windhoek. The focus was in part on a development project of the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) which was carried out in 2006-2010 in Namibia. The research followed participation observation with qualitative methodology based on interviews, conversations and interaction with the group of participants.

The results suggest that despite some great improvements in field of deafness in Namibia, the fact remains that Deaf in Namibia are still excluded from education to a large extent. The educational system does not fully recognize the needs of Deaf pupils and the access to interpreters remains a barrier. It was concluded that despite the willingness among specialists in Namibia there is still a lack within the strict system of Namibia to allow for exceptions when it comes to put things in action. Nevertheless the results indicate that empowerment is an important concept for Deaf people in developing countries and projects can have long lasting empowering effects on individuals.

Key words: Development studies, Deaf, empowerment, development aid, sign language and human rights

Útdráttur

Hugtakið valdefling hefur verið áberandi innan þróunarfræðinnar síðastliðna áratugi þar sem áhersla er á þátttöku heimamanna í þróunar-verkefnum. Litið er á einstaklinga sem þátttakendur í framþróun eigin samfélags og áhersla er lögð á sjálfstæða ákvarðanatöku þeirra. Markmið þessarar rannsóknar er að kanna áhrif valdeflingar heyrnarlausra einstaklinga sem byggir á vettvangsrannsókn í Namibíu sem gerð var í september og október árið 2012 í gegnum samskiptamiðstöð heyrnarlausra (CCDS) í Windhoek. Áherslan var að hluta til á þróunarverkefni Þróunarsamvinnustofnunnar Íslands (ÞSSÍ), frá árunum 2006-2010 í Namibíu. Rannsóknin fór fram með þátttökuathugun og eigindlegri aðferð sem byggði á viðtölum, samtölum og samskiptum við hóp þátttakenda.

Niðurstöðurnar benda til að þrátt miklar framfarir á sviði heyrnarlausra í Namibíu eru heyrnarlausir enn útilokaðir frá menntun að miklu leyti. Menntakerfið er ekki í stakk búið til að koma til móts við þarfir heyrnarlausra og skortur á túlkaþjónustu er enn mikil hindrun. Niðurstöður benda til þess að þrátt fyrir að einstaklingar innan sviðs er varða heyrnarlausar leggi sitt af mörkum er enn skortur á vilja innan stjórnkerfisins til að veita undanþágur innan menntakerfisins og leggja til kostnað í túlkaþjónustu. Niðurstöður gefa einnig til kynna að valdefling sé mikilvægt hugtak fyrir þróunarverkefni er varða heyrnarlaust fólk í þróunarlöndunum og geta leitt til valdeflingar heyrnarlausra einstaklinga til langs tíma.

Lykilorð: Þróunarfræði, heyrnarlausir, valdefling, þróunarsamvinna, táknmál og mannréttindi

Forewords

This thesis represents the final project in MA program in Development Studies from the University of Iceland worth of 60 ECTS units. This research was supervised by Davíð Bjarnason, Project Manager of ICEIDA and Jónína Einarsdóttir, Professor of Anthropology at the Faculty of Social and Human Science at the University of Iceland.

Foremost I like to thank both of my supervisors for advising me on selecting the topic and Davíð Bjarnason for helping me organizing the access to the field through the work with the SignWiki project. I furthermore thank them both for guidance and advices throughout the process. I also need to thank my participants in Namibia, those who gave their time to be interviewed, gave their stories and opinions willingly. I want to thank the head of CCDS, Lizette Beukes for her welcoming me and her assistance. I also thank my travel companion and co-worker in the SignWiki program, Árný Guðmundsdóttir. All the employees and others at CCDS who made me feel welcomed also deserve my gratitude.

Very special thanks goes to my interpreter, Magdalena Katjinamunene, who helped me finding interviewees that would fit the aim of the research, interpreted all the interviewees with the Deaf participants and assisted with travelling between locations to meet with them. All her work made my research possible and enjoyable.

Other people I like to include are Auður Agla Óladóttir, Hjörtur Már Reynisson, Hólmfríður Þóroddsdóttir and Ylfa Rún Óladóttir who all provided their assistance with proof-reading the thesis.

Lastly I like to thank my parents Ása Margrét Ásgrímsdóttir and Óli Jakob Hjálmarsson and my family for all their support throughout my education and believing in me in all that I do. Finally I thank my partner Árni Ingi Jóhannesson, for everything.

Abbreviations

CCDS	Centre for Communication and Deaf Studies
CODA	Children of Deaf Adult
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
HDR	Human Development Report
ICEIDA	Icelandic International Development Agency
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NNAD	Namibia National Association of the Deaf
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SHH	Communication Centre of Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Iceland
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

Contents

Abstract.....	3
Útdráttur	4
Forewords	5
Abbreviations	6
Introduction	10
1 Theoretical Framework	14
1.1 Power theories	14
1.1.1 Power cannot be shared	16
1.1.2 Power can be shared	17
1.2 Emergence of a concept	18
1.2.1 Defining empowerment in development action.....	20
1.2.2 Criticism of empowerment	21
1.3 The ways of empowerment	22
1.3.1 Removing barriers	23
1.3.2 Education	25
1.4 Deafness	26
1.4.1 What is deafness?	26
1.4.2 Views on deafness	28
1.4.3 Deaf culture	29
1.4.4 Deaf history	30
1.4.1 Deaf people in the developing countries	37
1.4.2 Sign languages	38
1.4.3 Empowerment of Deaf.....	40
1.5 Human rights	45
1.5.1 Leave no one behind.....	46
2 Setting: Namibia.....	50
2.1 History.....	51
2.2 Situation.....	52

2.3	Conventions and policies on disability.....	55
2.3.1	United Nations Convention on the Rights of PWD.....	55
2.3.2	National Disability Policy 1997	55
2.3.3	The National Disability Council Act 2004	55
2.3.4	Vision 2030.....	56
2.3.5	Other agreements and legislation	56
2.3.6	Disability and the policy environment.....	57
2.3.7	People with disabilities	58
2.3.8	Deaf in Southern Africa and Namibia	60
2.3.9	Education	61
2.3.10	Education for children and people with disabilities	63
2.3.11	Inclusive education	63
2.3.12	Deaf education	65
2.3.13	Development project for the Deaf	68
3	Methodology	71
3.1	Choosing the topic.....	71
3.2	Entering the field.....	73
3.3	Ethnography	74
3.4	Data collection.....	75
3.5	Interviews	76
3.6	Participants	77
3.7	Interviews through a sign language interpreter	79
3.8	Ethics	81
3.9	Data analysis.....	83
4	Results	86
4.1	The status of Deaf in Namibia.....	87
4.1.1	Seeing sign language for the first time	87
4.2	Power of Deaf.....	90
4.2.1	Comparison to other African countries	91
4.2.2	Deaf people and people with disability in Namibia	91

4.3	What does empowerment for Deaf mean?	93
4.3.1	“Education is a key to open all the doors“	94
4.3.2	Access to healthcare and to the society	96
4.3.3	Deaf teachers for Deaf children	97
4.3.4	Early intervention and involvement of parents	98
4.3.5	Employment of Deaf	100
4.3.6	Attitudes towards deafness / Hearing attitudes	101
4.3.7	Attitudes and self-empowerment	102
4.4	The ICEIDA project	104
4.4.1	Inclusive education	105
4.4.2	Sustainability of the ICEIDA project	107
4.5	Sign language interpreting service	108
4.6	The future	110
5	Discussion	113
5.1	Implications and suggestion	117
6	Conclusions	122
	References	124

Introduction

It is estimated that 80% of the Deaf population worldwide lives in the developing world. Poverty, poor educational system and limited access to health service attribute to a higher incidence of hearing impairment than in other parts of the world. In many countries there is a lack of access to proper education for Deaf people, sign language interpreters and other facilities. These hindrances, combined together with negative cultural attitudes, hinder Deaf to live fulfilled and prosperous lives. Despite great need there has not been sufficient focus on Deaf issues in the field of development. Furthermore, the history of Deaf communities, which is filled with negative attitudes, prohibition of the use of sign language and ignorance towards deafness and what it means to be Deaf, makes this group even more vulnerable. Therefore it is clear that Deaf people, especially in developing countries require special attention in the field of development.

The community of Deaf, defined as a language minority, is the target research group of this thesis. They are individuals that use sign language as their first language or for communication and see themselves as part of a linguistic minority group rather than being disabled, their identity is within a special culture. The concept “Deaf” with capital “D” is used by individuals to distinguish themselves from people that have a hearing impairment (“deaf”) but do not consider themselves as part of a community nor use sign language as their main way of communication (Ladd, 2003; Senghas & Monaghan, 2002).

The research field is in Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia, a developing, yet a middle income country in Southern Africa where general issues of Deaf still receive little attention. As in other developing countries many Deaf are still excluded from accessible education and their human rights continue to be violated. Many parents of Deaf are discouraged from sending their child to school because of lack of knowledge and negative attitudes towards children with disabilities. A recent project that was carried out by the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) in

Namibia 2006-2010 in cooperation with the Ministry of Education creates an opportunity for exploring in what way empowerment project affects the life of Deaf individuals and change these attitudes.

The concept "empowerment" is quite a recent but a popular concept in the field of development. The task of this paper is to research what the concept "empowerment" means to Deaf individuals and for the hearing people who work with Deaf. The question of interest in this regard is what impact did the project in Namibia have on the life of Deaf individuals in relation to empowering them; do they feel that they have different roles and possibilities for action in the community than before? What are Deaf individuals' opinions on issues involving Deaf in development projects and the process of development? Language is of central importance in this regard, and the role sign language plays in achieving empowerment and ensuring human rights for Deaf individuals. The aim of the research is also to look deeper into the impact of the project and to explore what are the long term effects, its sustainability. Such an exploration of Deaf empowerment and the process and outcome of development projects can offer important lessons for future work. The focus will be on the personal views of participants and for this purpose participant observation and qualitative interviews methods are deployed. The participants are members of the Deaf community in Namibia and hearing individuals working in the field of Deaf issues or who participated in the development project.

There are a few important factors that have shaped the decision to study this topic. The decision to study the Deaf community is grounded in the personal interest of the researcher and from her education as a sign language specialist and interpreter. The field is chosen because of the connection of the Icelandic Communication Centre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SHH) and the Ministry of Education in Namibia. The researcher is a sign language interpreter working at SHH and was able through work with the SignWiki project to go to Namibia which is the practical reason for the selection of that particular field. There is also a great need for this kind of research. Deaf communities tend to be isolated and even more so in developing countries. A lack of knowledge of sign language and its value is still a fact all around

the world and even more so in the poorer parts of the world. As mentioned earlier, little attention has been paid to this marginalized group in the field of development, there is for example little awareness of the special educational needs of deaf children. One of the aims of the ICEIDA project was to promote the importance of sign language as the first language for Deaf. In the context of the Millennium Development Goals, there is a need to draw attention to this community, but the MDG have been criticised for paying little attention to disability (United Nations, 2011). The second goal is to achieve universal primary education: “Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling” (United Nations 2012).

There is more to be done to ensure that deaf children not only attend school but receive the education in a mode they can understand. Namibia is an interesting field for this kind of research, as much work has been carried out to work towards equal rights for Deaf people it provides an interesting case to learn from. The theoretical task is to identify and examine some of the conceptualizations of empowerment in current development theory, practice, and policy, and explore what is the practical meaning for participants themselves in the development project.

The theoretical framework of the study is built up of five main chapters: *Power theories*, *Emergence of a concept*, *The ways of empowerment*, *Deafness*, and *Human rights*. The first chapter discusses power and theories on power relations including the ideas of Foucault and Gramsci and the discussion whether power can be shared or not. *Emergence of a concept* introduces the emergence of the empowerment concept within development including criticism. Next chapter *The ways of empowerment* discusses what empowerment entitles within the development discourse, and the theory of Amartya Sen. Chapter four, *Deafness* explains the issues surrounding deafness, including statistics, different views, and the Deaf community, the story of Deaf Education and colonization of Deaf. Chapter five, the last chapter in the theoretical framework is *Human rights* where human rights declarations are explored in the context of people with disabilities.

Setting outlines the field of study, including the history of Namibia, situation of people with disabilities, the educational system and the general situation for Deaf in Namibia. The *Methodology* chapter describes how data was collected and the methods used. The chapter on ethics outlines the issues concerning this kind of research and special factors to keep in mind. In *Research Findings*, results from interviews with Deaf and hearing people, are outlined. This is followed by a chapter five and six devoted to discussion about the findings, conclusions remarks of the researcher and suggestions.

1 Theoretical Framework

1.1 Power theories

Power, how it develops and divides between groups, is important for researches on empowerment of the Deaf community as it relates to minority groups and their exclusion in society. Power happens in relationships between people or communities and in this case it is between the societies of a ruling hearing majority and a Deaf minority. Power is an important phenomenon when discussing the deaf society, a minority that has through history been marginalized under the power of others. This chapter presents a brief discussion exploring key theories concerning power as a preamble to a deeper exploration of empowerment.

First to mention is Michel Foucault, a leading discourse theorist. The discourse theory explains how cultural patterns within societies create a situation where few in power control the knowledge of a whole society. The ruling minority maintains its power over a powerless majority and controls with both economic coercion and through a belief system or ideologies. Opposing ideas to the dominant group keep challenging and transforming the dominant culture in an everlasting process (Foucault, 1966). According to the theory it is through culture that knowledge, values, beliefs and actions are mediated and the ruling ideologies create what people perceive as normal. A rhetorical construction of normality is furthermore used to create “abnormality” and in the hierarchy established, the “normal” is in the superior position. A norm is used to define the “normal” and by that it also defines those who do not fit into this norm. According to Foucault this is especially dangerous for minority groups that have different values and language.

Katherine A. Jankowski (1997) argues that in the case of Deaf minorities, Foucault’s notions of “abnormality” are useful because Deaf people have for long been counted as “abnormal”. The ideas of the Italian philosopher

Antonio Gramsci are also useful in this regard. His theory of cultural hegemony explains the means of maintaining the state in a capitalist society where ideologies fight for power. When an ideology gains power (hegemony), those in control maximize their persuasive power through their control of crucial sets of discourses within the ideology. Those who obey the unwritten rules of that ideology start to believe that they accept it (even though they dissented it before). The term “subaltern” is derived from Gramsci, refers to a group of people that is denied meaningful access to “hegemonic” power (Gramsci, 1971).

A related concept is *symbolic power* introduced by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1979). It refers to unconscious modes of cultural or social domination that occur in everyday life in unbalanced relationships between a dominator and a dominated. Symbolic power constitutes the discipline that puts an individual in its place within the social hierarchy and includes the actions that discriminate, such as gender dominance or racism. But it is important to note, that according to Bourdieu, this situation requires that the dominated accept their position. According to him, the dominant culture creates taste that is installed in children at early age and usually marks them lifelong in certain classes. Individuals learn the behaviour of their class and when encountering a different culture or another class they may feel disgusted. In a relationship of symbolic power, violence does often occur. Bourdieu refers to this as “symbolic violence”. That is the imposition of thought and perception upon dominated agents who then take the social order to be just. This kind of violence is very powerful since it is embedded in the modes of action and structures of cognition of individuals. Furthermore, it imposes the spectre of legitimacy of the social order. An example of this kind of violence is a threat against a person’s autonomy or dignity such as when the rights of a person, (rights to make his/her own decisions, rights over his/her own body) are violated. It may be a direct and personal threat from one person to another or it can be indirect and impersonal when it is set within institutional relations of power.

Theorists agree that power is something that can be used to manipulate people and control them. Furthermore, according to the discourse theories, a

minority in power can control a majority through a belief system. But what is not clear is how power can be divided or exchanged between those who are in power and those who are not. Some theories claim that power is unchangeable and someone's to hold and give to others when and if it suits them while others believe that in fact, power can be shared. Therefore an important question in order to research empowerment is whether power can be given to other people? These views will be discussed in following chapters before moving into the emergence of empowerment and the definition within development.

1.1.1 Power cannot be shared

The word *empowerment* itself means giving power or equalizing power, but Yash Tandon (1995) argues that logically giving power would result in that those in power would lose some of theirs to those powerless. In his opinion the ideas of empowerment are “top-down” since they involve one side having something to give to the other. But Tandon argues that the lesson of history is that you have to struggle for power: “Those who ‘give’ power condition it: “power has to be taken. It is through active struggle for rights that you secure those rights” (Tandon, 1995:33). Jankowski agrees with this view: “Since the dominant society has created the rhetoric of pathology, demeaning marginalized groups, empowerment must to come from within” (Jankowski, 1997:160).

Along the same lines as Tandon (1995) and Jankowski (1997), Paulo Freire, a philosopher and educator argues that the oppressed themselves have to fight for power. In his book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* he states it is the obligation of those oppressed to liberate themselves as well as their own oppressors. He argues that those who oppress others do not have the ability to free people: “The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves” (Freire, 1996:44). Freire argues that freedom is not a gift rather acquired by conquest. He stresses that oppressed

people have an installed fear since they have become used to following guidelines from others (the oppressors). But when gaining freedom they would have to accept their own responsibility and autonomy. According to Freire, those oppressed are the only ones that truly understand what oppression means and why liberation is necessary. Furthermore he points out the importance of searching the causes of oppression so that the action towards liberation leads to a situation that is desired.

1.1.2 Power can be shared

Other scholars point out a different way of viewing power relationships, a view, which entails that power can be shared (Kreisberg, 1992; Page & Czuba, 1999). These scholars further argue that seeing power as expandable is a prerequisite for an empowerment process to happen. Within the view where power is regarded as a constant phenomenon that cannot be shared, those who are powerless are dependent on those with power to give it up. Pace and Czuba (1999) doubt the validity of this argument. They disagree because it excludes the view that a person can feel powerful without feeling it on someone else's expense. Seth Kreisberg (1992) stresses that empowerment is a shared process created through mutual dialogue aimed at improving lives of individuals, but at the same time the community in whole. Kreisberg points out that despite experiencing domination, individuals are capable of acting and bringing about change: "despite the pervasiveness of patterns of domination, we as individual human beings, acting with others, can be agents of social change" (Kreisberg, 1992:16). This aspect means that gaining power actually strengthens the power of others rather than diminishing it such as occurs within a relationship of domination. Kreisberg has suggested that power defined as "the capacity to implement" (Kreisberg, 1992:57) is broad enough to allow power to mean domination, authority, influence, and shared power or "power with" (Page & Czuba, 1999). Irma M. Munoz-Baell and M. Teresa Ruiz (2000) support the idea of power being shared, or as they call it "power-for" that means increasing the decision making skills of people:

Still, power-over is not the only option available. To give power can also be understood as power-for, which refers to power as a synonym for capacitation—that is, the need to increase the decision making skills of people. It can also refer to power-with, which is concerned with the idea that people feel more powerful when they are organised and work towards the same goal. In that sense, power-with promotes the strengthening of organisations, social networks and alliances. Lastly, empowerment can also be seen as power-inside, which is based on increasing the self esteem, self acceptance and self respect of people (42).

These ideas of power are based on acceptance of other people as equals. This also means that power relations do not have to be relation of dominant and dominator but can be relationships of support where people feel more powerful together not in exclusion (Munoz-Baell & Ruiz, 2000).

The belief that power can be shared is the foundation of the empowerment concept. In order to be able to empower another person it is necessary that power can be given or at least shared. Empowerment is a popular concept in the field of development and the next chapter discusses the emergence of the empowerment concept and the definition of the idea. This discussion includes the complications of the concept and the criticism.

1.2 Emergence of a concept

During the period 1970-80s there was a change in the view on poverty and it was recognized, as further argued by Sen (1999), that being poor or vulnerable does not only mean lack of income but also lack of power. This significant change in the view on poverty, development, and rights of minority groups was under influence of the current situation which included increased poverty, failure of the “trickle-down” economics and the limits of modernization development theory. Development assistance had not succeeded in what was initially hoped for, there was a lack of belief that

governments could successfully intervene on part of poor people and in addition there was an increasing depletion of natural resources. The attention started to move away from the aid givers on to the receivers with an emphasis on participatory approaches. The *1986 UN Declaration on the right to development* emphasizes people-centered development, meaning that those affected need to be active themselves, rather than merely being objects of development programs. Of central importance in this regard is participation, both as a basic right and as a way to realize other kinds of rights (United Nations, 1986). The idea of participation in development was to focus on enabling poor people to look critically on things that affect their life and take control of their own issues (Singh & Titi, 1995). In the *Human Development Report 1993*, the concept of participation is explained as involvement of people in decision-making that affect their lives, social, political or economical. Participation is seen as an essential component of human development and furthermore the concepts of participation and empowerment are connected together. The concept empowerment became the focus of women's movements as well as peace and social justice movements. It has since then become quite rapidly popular within the field of development (Sen, 1999).

The concept of empowerment was also in part a criticism on the concept of "participation", and an answer to the lack of power of the participants. The critics pointed out that even though those affected by development projects were enabled to participate, there was no guarantee they had any real power to choose or decide on issues related to the project (Tandon, 1995). Empowerment focused even more on people-centered approaches as seeing poor people as actors in changing their situation instead of looking at the government, state and policymakers as giving poor people solutions (Singh & Titi, 1995). Based on this view, theorists and practitioners in international development have come to realize that empowerment is a necessary component in development projects (Sen 1999). But they do not agree on what is the exact meaning of the word, how to implement it, how to measure it or even why it is important. These disagreements are not

merely academic exercises, because they shape the lives of people that are affected by development projects in the poorer parts of the world.

1.2.1 Defining empowerment in development action

Since there is no clear-cut definition of the word empowerment, it has been used for various purposes and often referred to without further explanation. It is widely used in descriptions of development projects without explaining in what way it will be implemented. Furthermore the word is used differently within different fields and people may not understand it the same way (Kreisberg, 1992; Page & Czuba, 1999; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997; Singh & Titi, 1995; VanderZwaag, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000). The simplest definition is to enable; to authorize (Singh & Titi, 1995); give power, equalize power or obtaining power to make decisions (Tandon, 1995; VanderZwaag, 1995). According to the World Bank (2002) empowerment in its broadest sense is “the expansion of freedom of choice and action” (14). The process of development, is seen as important not only the outcome (Singh & Titi, 1995).

The concept has been used for both an individual level and a collective level (World Bank, 2002; Kreisberg, 1992). On an individual level this refers to qualities such as self-strength, control, power, freedom of choice, life in accordance with one’s values, independence, and capability to fight for one’s rights (World Bank 2002). An individual that is empowered is usually a person that is considered to have a “sense of control, critical awareness of their sociopolitical environment, and involvement in their community” (Zimmerman, 2000:50). Kreisberg (1992) explains that empowerment has both been used to describe a process of psychological change connected with feelings of self-worth and confidence and is also used to refer to the conditions people live in. “the processes through which people develop more control over their lives and the skills and dispositions necessary to be critical and effective participants in our society” (Kreisberg, 1992:xxi). This entails that the empowerment of an individual is connected to empowerment of a whole society, it is an intertwined process. On a collective level the empowerment concept is used to mean for example good

governance, legitimacy and creativity of the private sector, transformation of economics to self-reliance, endogenous, human-centered development. There is an emphasis on transparency, accountability, democracy and sustainable development (Page & Czuba, 1999; Zimmerman, 2000).

As an overall description, empowerment has been described as a multilevel construct that happens within different dimensions; sociological, psychological, economic, and at different levels; individuals, organizations and communities (Page & Czuba, 1999; Zimmerman, 2000). These dimensions and levels are interconnected; contribution on one level (e.g. community level) contributes to another. Singh and Titi (1995) argue that the empowerment concept goes beyond democracy, human rights and participation since the focus is on making people understand their own reality, their social, political, ecological and cultural environment to be able to change their own situation. But as David VanderZwaag (1995) points out, further analysis is not clear; what kind of power, how much and when should a group of people that claims empowerment have a government on their own or even form a new nation? It is a valid question needed to be considered in developing projects aiming at empowering.

1.2.2 Criticism of empowerment

Even though empowerment is generally seen as a positive term there has also been criticism on how the concept has been used. Marc A. Zimmerman (2000) points out that even though empowerment is useful in many instances it has some complications. He argues that it has been difficult to measure empowerment and as has been noted above there is no clear definition of the concept. Some have therefore discarded the concept and consider it not helpful. Zimmerman further argues that empowerment theory might support traditionally masculine and Western standards of concepts of control, participation, and community.

Tandon (1995) has criticized both the concepts “participation” and “empowerment”. He argues they have lost their meaning or power. He argues that the elite in the third world is an actor in monopolizing power and keeps the wealth for itself in a situation of dictatorship and corruption.

Therefore to empower the poor public, this monopoly state has to be broken by encouraging small business and require accountability from governments and the creation of conditions where the distribution of wealth is more equal. Furthermore, he argues, that the concept “empowerment” is misunderstood; has gained respect within development discourse vocabulary without its social content being agreed upon. Tandon even goes as far as arguing that the empowerment concept has been used as an excuse to blame individuals for their situations by providing a rational explanation that they are responsible for themselves, but that it is not an institution’s responsibility to take care of people. He points out that theorists and people in power emphasis on solutions of poverty, such as advocating for empowerment, instead of looking into the causes. Tandon points out that since the causes rest within the current dominant capital system, speculation about the cause of poverty would point the finger back at them. Therefore it is a strategic move to look away from the cause and focus on ways for solutions in order to avoid admitting responsibility.

1.3 The ways of empowerment

The World Bank (2002) recognizes that there is no single model of an empowerment process. It is stressed that the process of empowerment differs between places and situations and different social and cultural context influence the process each time. As Sen (1999) argued, the freedom of choice increases the power an individual has over one’s life. Based on this it can be argued that poor individuals choices are limited with the consequence of limited power over one’s life. This chapter outlines some of the things that are considered important or necessary for empowerment to happen. The theories of Sen are used as a base for further discussion but he argues that development should be freedom-based where the way to empower people can be achieved by removing barriers.

1.3.1 Removing barriers

People with disability, including Deaf people, experience more barriers than people without disabilities. In the preamble to *the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)* it is acknowledged that disability is “an evolving concept” but also that attitudes and environmental barriers affect lives of people with disabilities. In that way the disability is created in interactions “between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. It means that the disability is not an attribute of a person but created in communication with others and the environment (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011).

It is further pointed out in the report from WHO and World Bank (2011) that just as an accessible environment enables an individual to access services and opportunities with ease, an inaccessible environment creates disability by barriers that hinder some individuals to participate. In case of deafness, it is a Deaf individual without an access to sign language interpreting service or a deaf person without any access to language, without access to communication. To improve poor conditions of people with disabilities it is necessary to remove these barriers.

The economist and Nobel laureate Sen expressed his ideas, in the book *Development as Freedom* (1999), written almost 15 years ago, and there he describes the world as a two way dimension where distribution of wealth and freedom is unequal. He considered the world filled with opportunities but his argument was that these opportunities were not equally accessible for all individuals. This inequality is no less true today and this is addressed by institutions such as the United Nations which claim that according to *the Human Development Report* addressing inequality between people in this world will be one of the most important issues in coming years (UNDP, 2013).

From Sen’s perspective addressing inequality of opportunities by providing freedom to individuals is the main tool in solving the problems of

the world, including hunger and violation of political rights. Freedom in this case ranges from being able to meet basic needs such as having access to healthcare and education to the right to participate in politics and in the society. This view represents a shift from the narrow view where the goal of development is merely expansion of economic growth expressed in financial terms. Growth in GNP is not seen as a goal in itself but is still recognized as an important mean to expand other types of freedom. The goal of development should be the ultimate freedom of a person and the process should involve expansion of basic freedoms of individuals (Sen, 1999).

Barriers or unfreedoms can be of various kinds: poverty, tyranny, poor economic opportunities or intolerance, malnutrition, limited access to healthcare, lack of sanitation and unclean water. Sen points out that unfreedoms are also found in richer countries; people have unequal access to healthcare and education and there is inequality between different groups of people, for example between men and women. Poverty is considered by Sen the biggest factor in creating unfreedoms of different kinds given, that those who do not even have the basic freedom of survival have few choices or opportunities to exercise their agency. These are dangerous situations since a certain “minimal freedom” is required to be able to gain other kinds of freedoms. According to Sen, political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security are important because they advance the general capability of a person. In the same way, unfreedoms breed different kinds of unfreedoms: “Economic unfreedom can breed social unfreedom, just as social or political unfreedom can also foster economic unfreedom” (Sen, 1999:8). Sen further discusses the matter of employment and he points out that it not only provides capital to survive but it also includes other important factors. The deprivation of employment is often taken care of with hand-outs or unemployment benefits by governments trying to solve a certain financial dilemma. But Sen argues that this ignores the other effects of unemployment such as psychological harm, loss of work motivation, skill and self-confidence. Someone who is denied the opportunities of employment is also deprived of those means.

1.3.2 Education

Education is considered an important part of empowerment and an effective way of development (Goodale, 1995) both socially and economically as it helps to increase equality in the distribution of wealth. It has been proved that education and training increases income, lowers fertility rate, increases productivity, and improves hygiene and nutrition, increases awareness towards healthcare and decreases infant mortality rate (UNDP, 2013). Furthermore education increases self-confidence, awareness and knowledge that are powerful tools for people to break out of poverty (Goodale, 1995). According to the *Human Development Report 2013*, educating mothers is more effective in decreasing mortality of children than the household's income. Consciousness-raising is important to empowering groups and the focus of empowerment projects should be on providing information, training and giving peer support (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011).

As pointed out, the meaning of empowerment differs between individuals; age, sex, class, and status in society make the empowerment process different for each person and therefore there is no single standard which can be applied for empowerment (World Bank, 2002). But it can be considered empowering if an organization provides their members with opportunities to gain control of their lives and influence policy decisions. Processes are empowering if they encourage people, help them develop skills to be independent and make them able to solve problems and make decisions (Zimmerman, 2000). According to Zimmerman (2000), all human beings have potential to empower themselves with the right measures.

In relations to empowering Deaf minority in a developing country it is first important to recognize the history of Deaf people. Deaf people are a unique group within every society and despite the fact that they live in all the countries in the world their situation is seldom understood by hearing counter-members of each society. In the next chapter the history of Deaf is explained: the status of Deaf in a power relationship with hearing people, the fight of being recognized as sign language users and the continuous struggle to gain power of their own issues. But before looking into the

history of Deaf, the topic of deafness will be discussed. There are different views on deafness and it is explored whether deafness is a disability or a cultural distinction. The aim of next chapter is to outline these different views. Since deafness is defined as a disability by majority of people (including organization such as the World Bank and the World Health Organization) and because of some shared experience Deaf have with people with other disabilities, disability is given space within this thesis.

1.4 Deafness

1.4.1 What is deafness?

World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that about 5% of the world's population, or around 360 million people worldwide have some degree of hearing loss that causes them difficulties. This means hearing loss greater than 40dB in the better ear in adults and a hearing loss greater than 30dB in the better ear in children, or as it is defined: "difficulty in hearing conversational speech or loud sounds" (World Health Organization, 2013). There is no specific number on how many of those are considered sign language users. Deafness can be caused by several factors and can be divided to congenital causes and acquired causes. The former refers to a loss that happens either before birth or soon after but acquired hearing loss can happen at any age. Hearing loss can be caused by diseases such as maternal rubella, meningitis, ear infections, it can be genetic or caused by accidents, exposure to too much noise, use of ototoxic drugs and not forgetting hearing loss that comes with ageing. Some of those causes are easily treatable and WHO concludes that half of all hearing losses could be prevented with primary prevention.

Some hearing loss can be restored with cochlear implants and hearing aids can be beneficial for some people with hearing loss. But only 10% of the need of hearing aids in the world is met and in the developing countries they are a seldom seen. The degree of hearing loss differs between individuals, some have mild hearing loss, others moderate and yet others

have profound hearing loss and are usually defined as Deaf. Those with mild to moderate hearing loss are often referred as “hearing impaired”.

Hearing loss affects people in different ways depending on where they live, their environment and personal circumstances. The difference is most obvious between developing countries and developed countries. In developing countries, Deaf or hearing impaired children receive little education and the employment rate is much lower among deaf adults than hearing. Even those that are employed tend to be in lower position than the general workforce (World Health Organization, 2013). But all over the world hearing loss creates the same difficulty in communication and can cause isolation and loneliness. Most deaf children are born to hearing parents and therefore the language acquisition does not happen normally as when hearing children receive the language from their parents and others around them. This means that parents of deaf children need special support so that their children will learn how to communicate. If nothing is done, the deafness is likely to have serious effects since being able to communicate and understand is important for every child’s cognitive development. According to WHO, this can be avoided when families are given the right opportunities and where Deaf people are given chance to participate on an equal basis with others. For it to be possible to give them the right support and language right from the start, it is important to identify deaf children at a young age with infant hearing screening programs. It is also important to respect that not all individuals who have serious problem with hearing use the same way of communication; it can be either through spoken or written language and/or sign language. The importance of sign language and its benefit for hearing impaired children is recognized by WHO: „Children with deafness should be given the opportunity to learn sign language along with their families“ (World Health Organization, 2013b). The organization also mentions the importance of providing sign language interpreting services to make it possible for Deaf to communicate with hearing people.

People with disability, including Deaf individuals, are more likely to be unemployed, less educated, in worse health, poorer, experience limited access to resources, health care and education and are more likely to have

lower self-esteem than people without disability (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). Globally, the literacy rate is extremely low for persons with disabilities (PWD), only three percent of people with disabilities in total are literate (Kotzé, 2012). This can in part explain how difficult it is for people with disabilities to get jobs, pursue higher education and get out of poverty. In poorer countries where most disabled people live, these difficulties are exacerbated; malnutrition, unsanitary conditions, wars, natural disaster and high rates of traffic accidents increase the likelihood of becoming disabled (Kiyaga & Moores, 2003; World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). Consequently they are in special danger of remaining in poverty.

1.4.2 Views on deafness

There are different views on deafness that have shaped the circumstances of Deaf individual's experiences through the years. These views evolve around the topics of deafness as disability versus deafness as culture, seeing it as a medical problem or as a social problem. The medical view identifies deafness as a disability but the social view is the way of seeing Deaf people belonging to a language minority (Lane, 1999). Another issue is whether Deaf studies fit within disability studies.

Deaf leaders as leaders in the disability movement argue that a disability is created in the discrimination of society. In other words, it is the environment that decides the degree the disability affects a person (Lane, 1999). In disability studies, the focus is on seeing an individual with disability as a unique way of being within a society. As with the Deaf culture view, the disabled culture is seen as being both to celebrate and protect (Shultz, 2000). Disabled activists have fought against prejudice towards persons with disabilities and created a perspective where the disability is not seen as disgraceful. This even goes to the extent where a possible cure is rejected (Martin, 1997). Deaf share some experience with other disability groups, for example they tend to be less educated and less likely to get employment than others in the society (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). Still they also face a special challenge

that makes them unique and distinguishes them from other groups of people with disability. Paddy Ladd points out that Deaf people have been defined by their societies as disabled (Ladd, 2003) but some Deaf advocates have objected this definition based on the cultural view where Deaf are considered not to be disabled.

The medical view has been predominant throughout the history of Deaf and has had serious effects on the Deaf society. This view regards deafness as a deficit that needs to be cured with science or technology and is for establishing the rights of persons with disabilities to live as “normal” as possible. Deafness is seen as an undesirable condition that causes isolation and depression. Throughout history, as will be describe later in the chapter on history of Deaf education, there are many examples of teachers, doctors, and others trying different ways, some more cruel than other, to find a cure for deafness (Ladd, 2003).

1.4.3 Deaf culture

The social view towards Deaf is recent, it emerged only around 1980. It recognizes culture as an important factor in shaping people’s lives and in this view. Deaf are seen as part of a culture that is valuable on its own (Ladd, 2003). People naturally form groups where they share the same experience as others in the group and together create a culture, it is the collective sense that makes people feel a part of a particular society or a group (Geertz, 1973; McDermott & Varenne, 1995). What is typically shared is territory, ethnicity or religion; individuals are normally born into a certain culture and share the same culture with their family. But people can also form a culture around shared goals, rules, expectations, attitudes, abstractions, complexities or common characteristic or because of shared physical or cultural characteristic such as skin colour or language (Lane, Hoffmeister & Bahan, 1996; McDermott & Varenne, 1995). Members tend to marry inside the minority and more often than not suffer some kind of oppression from dominant communities (Lane et al.,1996). This includes people with physical, mental or other health conditions, blind or Deaf (Kreps, 2000).

The concept “Deaf” with capital “D” is used by individuals to distinguish themselves from people that have a hearing impairment but do not consider themselves as part of special community nor use sign language as their main language (“deaf”). The degree of hearing impairment is irrelevant for membership in Deaf culture. “Deaf” with a capital D is viewed to have a positive meaning where one considers him/herself as a part of a cultural-linguistic minority but not a person with a disability, where one normally uses sign language as his/her first language or for communication. For the purpose of this thesis it was chosen to use Deaf with a capital D in line with this argument as this research is on the Deaf community as a linguistic minority. It is though important to keep in mind that it is impossible to distinguish between whether a person is to be referred as Deaf or deaf so in many cases Deaf will be used to refer to the both groups. The Deaf community fights against prejudice, for the acceptance of sign language as a first language and for full interpreting service in order to have equal opportunity to participate in society as any other (Ladd, 2003; Senghas and Monaghan, 2002). As Ladd explains, considering oneself culturally Deaf, differs from the hearing’s idea of deafness. It means that an individual accepts his/her status as a Deaf person and does not wish to be hearing. Ladd (2003) points out that in the same way other cultural groups such as people of ethnic minorities, and Women, despite experiencing oppression, do not wish to become white or men. The wish is not to change and blend in with the dominant group but rather remove the oppression and live on equal basis with others.

1.4.4 Deaf history

In line with the medical view, the academic literature has for long time viewed deafness as a state of misery that should be avoided, where the focus is on cures or mitigation of the disability. This chapter reviews the history of Deaf education, the manual and oral methods and the effect of a hundred years of banning sign language. The discussions will explore the theories of Foucault, Said and Gramsci in this context, outlining in what way the concepts of orientalism, colonization and bio-power relate to the experience

of Deaf people and ideas in Deaf studies on the matter. Education for Deaf worldwide has in the past been, and still is, a complicated matter. Since the beginning of formal Deaf education, Manualism (in favour of sign language) and Oralism (against the use of sign language) have been on opposing sides of a heated debate that continues to this day.

1.4.4.1 Oralism

Oralism is a method where Deaf are taught through voiced language by using lip reading and speech. The method is based on the idea to give Deaf individuals oral language to be able to communicate in the main spoken language. Deaf are supposed to learn to talk with their voice and sign language is frowned upon. This method became mainstream in 1880 when sign language in schools was forbidden at *The Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf* in Milano. At the Congress 163 hearing educators, and only one Deaf, came together from different countries and concluded with the overwhelmingly results (158/6) that the oral approach should be the main medium for teaching Deaf. Sign language should preferably be eradicated. These ideas spread throughout the world and became predominant in education for the Deaf during the next hundred years (Devlieger, 1994; Jankowski, 1997; Ladd, 2003; Lane et al., 1996). Even though the oral method was directed at education for children this was also an attack on sign language and the Deaf community in whole (Jankowski, 1997). As Ladd (2003) explains, the effects of Oralism were disastrous with the consequence that almost all Deaf children growing up were counted illiterate. It is a shocking fact that before this time Deaf people used to be literate. But with the results of the Milan conference, leaders of the Deaf community died out around 1920s leaving few Deaf people capable of leadership. For a period of hundred years, Ladd argues, Deaf education was on hold.

Spoken languages were considered superior and hearing teachers were chosen over Deaf, which created unequal power relationship between Deaf and hearing. Indirect violence of this kind became everyday matter in a way it seems natural both to the one who violates and the one being violated.

There are examples of legitimized organized violence in early education for the Deaf since children could expect severe punishment for using their hands to sign. The suppression of sign language has led to indirect violence of hearing specialists against Deaf people (Ladd, 2003; Rose & Smith, 2000).

Jankowski (1997) argues that the oral method of teaching is based upon a philosophy that sees speech as the most valuable educational form. It is built upon the idea that Deaf are to be as much “hearing” as possible, that is every effort should be made to integrate them into the society. But Deaf people point out the frustration in trying to understand the voiced language and to learn speaking with voice with so little results while all other education is wasted. Lip reading can only get very limited meaning across and misunderstanding is inevitable. The oral method had serious effects on self-esteem of Deaf who experienced never being good enough (Jankowski, 1997; Lane, 1999; Lane et al., 1996).

1.4.4.2 Manualism

Manualism is on the opposite end of the spectre, a method which uses sign language as its medium. This method emphasis on giving Deaf children their natural language and not forcing voiced languages upon them. At present times there are different methods used and bilingualism is widely seen as a positive thing and used as a method for Deaf, where they are taught in sign language but also taught the voiced language of the dominant society they live in. But the ideologies of the struggle between Deaf and hearing are still the same as they were more than hundred years ago. The search for a cure continues today with genetic research and cochlear implants that represent new threats towards the existance of Deaf people as a cultural group. With the memories of the devastating effects of the sign language ban, the fear remains that the history of oppression could be repeated. The debate between ideologies of Oralism and Manualism, between hearing specialists and “culturally” Deaf people is therefor still alive today (Ladd, 2003).

1.4.4.3 Deaf colonization

Post-Colonial Studies see marginalization of a group as a process of colonization. Scholars from different fields have identified the Deaf community within ethnical, traditionally marginalized groups that have experienced oppression and paternalism from dominant culture (Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1999). Ladd (2003) has pointed out that Deaf fit to Gramsci's description of a "subaltern" referring to a group of people that is denied meaningful access to "hegemonic" power. He has pointed out that almost all studies on the topic of deafness have been conceived, controlled and written by hearing people. The concept "Others", made popular by Edward Said (1978) in the book *Orientalism*, also fits with the Deaf, but that refers to colonized groups such as the working-class, peasant groups, language and religious minorities, women, gays, disabled and Deaf (Said, 1978; Ladd, 2003).

Harlan Lane, a hearing professor of psychology researched Deaf culture and in his book *The Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community* (1999) he compares colonialism to the experience of Deaf people:

Colonialism is the standard, as it were, against which other forms of cultural oppression can be scaled, involving as it did the physical subjugation of disempowered people, the imposition of alien language and mores, and the regulation of education on behalf of the colonizer's goals (31).

Lane saw some striking similarities with the experience of Deaf people in Burundi, and native in the colonization time: "...I had come to know the struggle of deaf people, and I naturally saw in Africa's colonial history (and its aftermath) terms of comparison for the oppression of deaf communities" (31). He was shocked to see the similarity of those experiencing colonization and Deaf people. In order to make this more visible and in part to prove his point, he listed colonizers descriptions of native Africans and in comparison he gathered descriptions of specialists or professionals of Deaf people, from journals and textbooks. These were both positive and negative

description of Deaf but negative words on those two lists were many the same. Native people were described as childlike, dirty, lazy, superficial, animalistic, ignorant, cruel, and unintelligent and so on. From the professional descriptions of Deaf people these same themes are found: childlike, immature, aggressive, having no language, paranoid, isolated, unintelligent and so on.

Lane (1999) has used Foucault's theories and applied the term bio-power to the experience of Deaf people. The term bio-power created by Foucault refers to power over bodies of people. According to Foucault (1998) there was a shift in human history in the eighteenth century as life was beginning to be administered and controlled. This means that the body of human became an object to study. With power and knowledge the body became subjected to intervention as science and medicine were strengthened. As Lane points out, hearing people have become so used to looking at deafness in a particular way, through the lenses of the medical view and as it is legitimized within the medical profession, that they believe they are describing the Deaf community correctly. This image places the hearing perspective in a position of control over the Deaf and hearing see the task as "civilizing" or restoring Deaf back to the dominant society (Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1999).

Scholars in Deaf studies have argued that the dominant culture has always had a paternalism way of acting towards the Deaf community (Jankowski, 1997; Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1999; Senghas & Monaghan, 2002). Paternalism is described by Lane as follows: "a system under which an authority undertakes to supply the needs and regulate the conduct of those under its control" (Lane, 1999:37). In case of the Deaf this means how hearing people create an image of Deaf that fit their own interests. Hearing paternalism fails to understand the value of a Deaf community and their story is ignored. Paternalism is based on an image of the others as described by Said, a "stereotype" of Deaf that does not correspond to the cultural identity of the Deaf. Building on this image is useful in sustaining the superior position of hearing people. It can be regarded as a self-serving way to reassure those in control of the legitimacy of what they are doing and

protect them from change. If this stereotype of Deaf was deconstructed, hearing paternalism would lose its power. As Lane (1999) points out, it would mean recognizing that Deaf people, not hearing, are best suited in Deaf education and sign language to be respected on an equal basis with other languages. He stresses the negative effects of paternalism:

Paternalism, whether that of the colonizers in Africa or that of hearing professions concerned with deaf communities, is benighted, unsuccessful, and selfish, but the catalog of its evils does not end there. Paternalism places its beneficiaries in a dependent relation and keeps them dependent for its own psychological and economic interest (38-39).

Lane further argues that the paternalism ignores the history of the dependent. It is avoiding responsibility by referring to imaginary inferiority of the beneficiary (look at Deaf as weak and unable to care for themselves). Paternalism installs its own values in the beneficiary which makes those views very pervasive as the oppression is internalized. Interventions from professions which are involved in the lives of Deaf people, such as school administrators, interpreters, audiologist are predicated on an imbalance of power that can be oppressive (Lane et al., 1996). Those trying to restore hearing to the members of the Deaf community are looked at, from Deaf activist's perspectives, as "audist" in a negative way and as "oppressors" (Ladd, 2003; Lane 1999).

Serious prejudices against people with disability continue to prevail. This is especially visible in rural areas in Africa, where the condition is linked to notions such as shame, sickness, stain on the family, punishment for sins of the parents and often disability is regarded as being result of witchcraft and so on (Kiyaga & Moores, 2003; Kotzé, 2012). As reported by Hermien Kotzé (2012) interviewees throughout Southern Africa claimed that people with disabilities were often considered to be stupid, sick, abnormal, useless, helpless and unable to make contribution to society and decide for themselves. A distinction is made between "us" and the "other" or "them" as in "abnormal". Negative attitudes disempower individuals; they have an

effect on self-esteem and render individuals powerless and more likely than their counter able-bodied citizens to avoid participation (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). This seriously affects the lives of people with disability because the dominant culture is the one that creates “rules” of the society that everybody is supposed to follow. If these rules are not followed, individuals become isolated and encouraged to give up their identity and blend in with the dominant group. This ideology of segregation is based on ethnocentrism, the members of a dominant group believe their cultural perspective is the best and others are inferior (Kreps, 2000). Gary L. Kreps (2000) points out that even though people of marginal groups are sometimes positioned within organization in visible positions, they are rarely given real authority, unless they adapt to the dominant norm system. This situation may falsely show acceptance of cultural diversity, giving a person with disability fake expectation of equity and opportunities.

Images of Deaf lacking intelligence have been used and to some extent still exist. Many people are familiar with the expression “deaf and dumb”, but that refers to a simple mind as well as being unable to hear (Lane, 1999). These expressions can also be found in different languages and in Sub-Saharan Africa these terms are common. In Uganda for example, it is the word “kasiru” that connotes “stupidity” in one of the indigenous languages that is used to refer to Deaf individuals. It is common tradition in some African societies to replace a name given to a Deaf child with the term meaning “the deaf one” (Kiyaga & Moores, 2003). These expressions, found widely around the world, stress the fact that Deaf have for a long time been labelled as a lesser species, nonhuman and even resembling animals. With this negative labelling and connotations, Jankowski (1997) and Ladd (2003) argue, the Deaf became incapable to care for themselves and the dominant society got the authority and permission to control them and make experiences on them in a search for a cure. The best fix possible was for the Deaf individuals to restore some hearing, to become “normal” like the dominant group. Labelling has serious implications but labels have been used by colonial forces and according to Sarah Batterbury, Mike Gulliver and Paddy Ladd (2007; 2003), this continues today. Deaf have, as is clear

from their history, experienced oppression and they have been denied a full citizenships in society based on the idea that they are biologically inferior.

1.4.1 Deaf people in the developing countries

There is little statistical data about Deaf people in particular and their specific situation. This lack of data affects project planning and the lack of knowledge about Deaf in each country makes Deaf education more problematic. There are for example no statistics about how many Deaf are in schools, how many are unemployed, or about the provision of sign language interpreting service and so on. But based on experience and observation and what national associations of Deaf and other organizations have confirmed, *The World Federation of Deaf* verifies that there is a lack of schools for the Deaf, high illiteracy and unemployment rates among the Deaf. There is also great lack of qualified interpreters, especially in developing countries (Haualand & Allen, 2009).

In 2009, the World Federation of Deaf carried out a research: *Deaf People and Human Rights*. There were 93 countries, including Namibia, which replied to questions on the situation of the Deaf, addressing issues like sign language, interpreting service, education, accessibility and so on. The main conclusion was that the human rights of Deaf are being violated all over the world. Examples included that Deaf were not allowed to have driver's license (31 countries), had limited access to information and media, had poor literacy rates, experienced prejudices, had poor education, there was lack of respect towards sign language, poor quality of interpreting service, they had limited access to higher education (interpreters unavailable) and so on. It is recognized in the survey that majority of Deaf population in developing countries (even up to 90%) are not literate and have never been in school. Sign language is oppressed in societies around the world especially in developing countries and even today sign language is not permitted in education in some countries. This makes the group of Deaf vulnerable and many individuals are not aware of their rights or capabilities (Haualand & Allen, 2009).

1.4.2 Sign languages

All human beings have a need for communication and it is what makes us human. Language shapes reality in society and transmits ideology, consciously and unconsciously. Furthermore, because language transmits ideology, languages can create and sustain power (Jankowski, 1997). Jankowski (1997) points out the unique situation of the Deaf; while fighting against power is not unique to the Deaf community the difference between them and other groups lies in struggle for the right to use their own language. The way to express their wishes is transmitted in a modality that the dominant group refuses and the fight for being recognized revolves around the topic of sign language.

Before sign languages were recognized it was believed among scholars and laymen that languages had to be heard and spoken with voice. As is clear from the story of Deaf education, speech was considered a necessity for normality and Deaf were excluded for most part. Deaf people were defined as subhuman and thought to be unable of thought or using language (Ladd, 2003). In 1960, a linguistic professor of English, William Stokoe, a hearing individual himself, published a monograph: *Sign Language Structure* that proved the linguistic value of sign languages. He researched American Sign Language (ASL) and concluded that it consisted of signs made up of smaller components, handshapes, locations, orientations and movements. This is the grammar, same as with spoken language that are built up of smaller components: vowels and consonants that together form word and words put together form a sentence (Lane, 1999). Stokoe showed that ASL is as fully formed human language as other languages and his work laid the ground for sign languages to be viewed as independent languages.

By recognizing sign languages, the Deaf community could be defined as a linguistic group (Ladd, 2003; Rose Smith, 2000). From the 1980s sign languages began to be accepted as the language for Deaf in schools and acknowledged by linguists as equal to spoken languages. Deaf studies have since been established and services such as sign language interpreters made available (Ladd, 2003). At present times, sign language is accepted,

supported by a vast amount of evidence that it is in fact equal to others languages and linguists agree that basic principles and capacities for language are located deep in the brain of children irrelevant whether the language is signed or spoken (Lane et al.,1996).

But within the wider society, there is still generally lack of understanding of sign language. Speech is still often preferred to signs as the correct way of communication where sign language and a visual mode of communication are perceived as “deviation from the norm” (Jankowski, 1997; Ladd et al., 2003; Lane, 1999). Sign languages are often misunderstood as being alternate forms of spoken words and not respected as a full language on their own (Jankowski, 1997). While it is true that there have been created ways of communication that are copies of spoken words or artificially constructed like Manually Coded English (MCE) or Signing Exact English (SEE) sign languages are full languages like other spoken languages. A common misconception also entails that sign languages are universal while each country has in fact its own independent language. The reason is that they, like voiced languages, develop in each community (Ladd, 2003; Lane et al.,1996).

Communication in signs has a unique ability that differs from other languages. There are common syntactic similarities between different sign languages over the world which means they are more easily transmittable between international borders. This has some benefit as it is easier for a sign language speaker to understand a foreign sign language, than a hearing person to understand a foreign spoken language. This strengthens the global connection between Deaf individuals, creating a Deaf global identity (Batterbury et al., 2007; Ladd, 2003). Jan-Kåre Breivik (2005) points out that despite the Deaf being vulnerable because of their experience and struggle they are also strong. The sense of belonging to an international community of sign language speakers is considered valuable. Interestingly, most Deaf find it easier to communicate with other Deaf in another country than with a hearing person of same nationality because of mutual understanding and background in common experiences.

Sign language became a symbol of unity for the community of Deaf and according to Jankowski (1997) it represented how a symbol of oppression can turn into a positive tool in the fight for equality. Sign language became a part of the dignity of Deaf experiences, of being a part of a community and gave space to form their own institutions. It made them able to create their own discourse and define normality in their own terms (Ladd, 2003). Communication is the central issue of the Deaf movement as can be seen in the fight for sign language in classroom settings during the time sign language was forbidden (Jankowski, 1997). Jankowski argues that empowerment of Deaf can be achieved through language. According to her it is important to research how rhetoric of a dominant group has shaped the story and identity of Deaf people. Sign language is regarded by many scholars to play a central role in the response against a hearing community in trying to isolate Deaf (Breivik, 2005; Jankowski, 1997; Ladd, 2003).

1.4.3 Empowerment of Deaf

Basing on the discussions in previous chapters it can be argued that empowerment is an important concept for the Deaf community. According to the World Report on Disability (2011) there is a great need to address disability in international development efforts. People with disability can in fact benefit from development projects but they need to be given a higher priority. It is important that people with disability are included in the development process, not only as beneficiaries but also in making decisions such as during the stages of planning, implementing and monitoring projects (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). In line with Sen's theory, it is necessary to remove barriers that hinder people from full participation in their community and this is in particular an urgent matter for people with disabilities. All people have the right of access to education, employment and to participate on all levels within their society. According to the World Health Organization and World Bank Group there is evidence that innovative policies and programmes can improve lives of people with disabilities (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011).

Munos-Baell and Ruiz (2000) point out that an attempt to increase the power of people can often result in a highly objectionable situation of dominance/subordination. In the case of deafness this is exemplified in the contestation between the views of the hearing and the Deaf. The implementation of empowerment at project level can be complex and it is necessary to know what it is that empowers particular groups of people. Basing on Sen's view as seeing development as removing barriers it is necessary to know and understand what barriers or unfreedoms people experience and how to remove them. Therefore it is important to analyse further what unfreedoms the Deaf in particular experience and what it means to give power to them. Jankowski (1997), emphasises that empowerment of Deaf has to involve creation of a "barrier-free environment" (158) where the world belongs equally to Deaf and hearing people.

1.4.3.1 Empowerment projects for the Deaf in developing countries

Empowerment of Deaf people has not been widely emphasised within development planning. But examples of projects for the empowerment of Deaf have for instance been discussed in relation to a project in Jamaica. In 2005, Amy T. Wilson an Associate Professor at Gallaudet University carried out research on American development organizations bringing assistance to Deaf people in developing countries. Her result was that despite good will in involving Deaf in planning, they often felt left out. The American organizations were not prepared to nor had they sufficient knowledge to work with the Deaf community. On the contrary, the assistance brought to Deaf people in developing countries unintentionally created relationships of dependency or oppression rather than relationship of support.

She interviewed over 60 Deaf and hearing people involved with the organizations (both Americans and Jamaicans) that were providing assistance to Deaf as well as interviewing the Jamaican Deaf beneficiaries. There was only one out of the three American organizations that had indigenous Deaf adults involved in planning and implementation of their

programs. There were often hearing people without any or with little knowledge of deafness and sign language who were responsible for the programs, implementation, planning and evaluation. Deaf individuals described that their opinions were not listened to nor taken seriously. Sign language was not used by hearing teachers at schools and Deaf felt that their culture and language was not supported. They furthermore expressed worries of becoming dependent on the American support. The Deaf Jamaicans felt that they did not learn to take responsibility for themselves and stressed they would like to see the American organizations work directly with Deaf indigenous organizations and also include Deaf Americans. The suggestion from the Deaf themselves on making empowerment of Deaf happen included: interpreter training programs, legal aid, leadership training, job skills training, teachers training in Deaf education, teaching of Deaf adults, establishing more Deaf associations and promoting of Deaf awareness in hearing society (Wilson, 2005).

1.4.3.2 Strategies for the empowerment of Deaf

Wilson (2005) suggested some ways to improve development assistance for the Deaf. These included employing Deaf people in the organization of the beneficiary country, working with indigenous Deaf organizations, and involving Deaf people in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the project. She further stressed the importance of a clear understanding of Deaf culture and communication, sign language and Deaf education, on the part of the providers. The providers should know the history of Deaf education and the values of the Deaf community they are assisting. Wilson also argued that project planners need to be aware of particular cultural settings of the projects. Culture in each country differs and there may be different views towards deafness in different places. The majority of the society might for example perceive deafness in a special way, negative or positive, that influences the lives of the Deaf beneficiaries. For instance, there might be religious views that deafness is a gift, or a punishment from God. Wilson points out that it is important that the providers are accountable to the

people who support the project and should also work with others who work within the same field of deafness and development.

Munoz-Baell and Ruiz (2000) emphasize the importance of bearing in mind that empowerment of Deaf can result in increased conflicts instead of reducing them. They argue that since deafness causes breakdown in communication, empowering strategies for Deaf should primarily aim at removing communication barriers. They point out that it is not enough to change the legislation to empower Deaf people because changing the environment is not sufficient, individuals also have to have the power within themselves to practice their rights. It is also necessary to change the pathological stigma, negative stereotypes and prejudice towards the Deaf. Munoz and Ruiz therefore point out that empowerment projects should both work at removing barriers in the environment, as well as increasing the decision making skills, self-esteem and self-acceptance of Deaf individuals.

Access to information is also part of the empowerment for any marginalized group, and for the Deaf in particular. The Deaf have limited access to information such as news, television programs and communication within healthcare, and this needs to be addressed. As a part of empowerment, connections should be established with Deaf organizations and federations to empower them to provide the Deaf with information on various topics. Munoz-Baell and Ruiz further suggest that programs should include support of families with a Deaf child and help the Deaf to develop strategies to deal with some of the consequences of being Deaf such as stress, loneliness or isolation. This could be a part of early intervention that is a process where a child is diagnosed at an early age and special arrangements are made so that the child will have the most opportunities in life (World Health Organization, 2013b).

Hilde Haualand and Colin Allen (2009) illustrate four basic factors they claim are necessary so that Deaf fully enjoy human rights: recognition of Deaf culture and identity, use of sign language(s), bilingual education and accessibility to all areas of society (including legislation to secure equal citizenship for all, to prevent discrimination and to increase sign language interpretation). They point out that it is sign language that is the foundation

for these factors and the accessibility is based on the interpreting service being available.

As Jankowski (1997) points out, Deaf are best suited to control the education of Deaf and should play a significant role in shaping big decisions that affect them. They are experts in the Deaf experience and understand the unique needs of communication and therefore should have authority in their own institutions. This can be done by encouraging Deaf to be leaders and make their own research. Education is important and as Deaf people become educated, attitudes in society will start to change.

1.4.3.3 Sign language interpreting service

As pointed out, sign language is very important for Deaf people and their access to the society. Having access to society is fundamental for participation and therefore sign language interpreting service should be part of projects aiming at empowering Deaf people. The issue of access for people with disabilities often refers to access to buildings and other facilities. But it is important to remember that access also means being a part of a society; being able to participate, attend school and to have access to politics and information. Access for Deaf usually does not refer to physical things, but rather to have access to information and being able to communicate with hearing that do not know sign language (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001).

Before 1960s, there were neither formal sign language interpreting services nor programs to train interpreters. Deaf usually relied on parents, siblings or friends for communication. There were no established services and those who helped the Deaf out did this voluntarily and were in the role of a “helper”. But with more social awareness and attainment of rights for minority groups of the 1960s-70s this began to change. Stokoe’s research and discovery that sign languages were fully rule-governed languages, as discussed above, helped forming sign language interpreting service as a serious profession. The recognition of Deaf cultures further strengthened the notion that sign language interpreters also have to work with different cultures. It was therefore recognized that to be fluent in the language, you

need to have a good understanding of the culture as well (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001). Presently, it is widely acknowledged that sign language interpreters are also bi-cultural interpreters and there are many sign language interpreting services throughout the world (Mindess, 2006).

The role of sign language interpreting services is to build communication bridges between hearing and Deaf for the benefit of both groups. Deaf, as all other human beings need to be able to communicate with several institutions throughout their life. There are few people in hearing societies that know sign language and to be able to get services in everyday situations, communication is necessary; within the healthcare system and hospitals, banks, schools, employment and so forth. Subtitles and sign language interpreting services are regarded as essential for Deaf people to be able to fully participate in the society today (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001).

In order for groups to be able to hold governments accountable, human rights can be a helpful tool. Human rights have increasingly become important within the development field. The recognition as a linguistic minority with right of its language and right of services needed, human rights are important to Deaf individuals. Next chapter provides discussion about human rights with emphasis on rights that involve rights of people with disabilities. This includes the rights of Deaf to their language and access to education and information. These rights can be fulfilled only if sign languages are formally recognized and access to sign language interpreting service is ensured.

1.5 Human rights

The basic notion of equality between people was already established with the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* written in 1789. The first article stresses that all human beings are born free and equal: „Men are born and remain free and equal in rights“ (Conseil-constitutionnel, 1789). But even though it declared “all“ human beings equal this excluded women, children, black people, people with disability, prisoners and even people without properties and in some cases people in certain religious groups

(Hunt, 2007). These notions of human rights and equality have changed a lot through history, from considering only white men in the middle class as recipient of these rights to including everyone; women and most recently children and people with disability.

One of the most important human rights treaties in contemporary time is *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN, 1948), which states that equality for all members of the human family is the fundamental foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Every person shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and human rights should be protected by rule of law (UN, 1948). Article 1 stated that: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (1).

In Article 2 it is stressed that race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status is not to distinct between individuals. No distinction shall be made on basis of political jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs. In article 23 the right to work and have a choice of employment with just and favourable conditions is declared and the right to protection against unemployment. Education is also considered a right, as article 26 (1) states that:

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

1.5.1 Leave no one behind

As mentioned, the rights of people with disabilities were not part of human rights in the early stages. It is only recently that the discourse concerning disability has incorporated the notions of human rights. In 2006, people with disability gained special attention to make sure that their rights like others

are respected. It does, in fact, not introduce any new rights of people with disability, but it is an emphasis that human rights also apply to people with disabilities. It includes social and economic rights; access to education and employment as well as health and housing. The preamble of the Convention states that persons with disability shall be equal to others and have equal opportunities to participate in decision-making on policies, including those that affect them: “Considering that persons with disabilities should have the opportunity to be actively involved in decision-making processes about policies and programmes, including those directly concerning them.”

The UN CRPD is the first international treaty to mention sign language and to specify the right of its users in several articles. Sign languages are defined equal to other languages and countries that ratify the agreement must recognize sign language and its official usage. Identity and culture of Deaf is also to be promoted and protected. Furthermore, countries must provide facilities for Deaf to learn sign language and support their right to receive education through their language. The right to professional sign language interpreters is also guaranteed through the Convention. Overall, the Convention clearly emphasizes that all people with disabilities are equal to others and have the right to get recognition and support of their cultural and linguistic identities. This is also recognizing the special needs of Deaf, their culture and language (United Nations, 2006).

International laws do therefore exist and include principles of non-discrimination: the right to use one’s own language, the right to participate and to communicate. Like other linguistic minorities the members of the Deaf community have their right of respect for their language and culture (Haualand & Allen, 2009). But despite these international agreements and good legislation and policies which many countries have agreed to, there is a lack of effective administrative infrastructure in many countries especially in developing countries, and lack of capacity for implementation. Without a change, the World Health Organization and the World Bank point out that people with disability will continue to be on the edge of society (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011): “unless persons with disability

are included into the post-2015 development agenda, this agenda will fail to be truly inclusive” (World Bank, 2013).

But still, there is increasingly emphasis on disability issues within the field of development (Bjarnason, 2013). The MDGs have been criticized of lacking attention on disabilities issues and vulnerable groups. But it is evident that these issues are getting more important within the development field. The *High Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda* established by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon makes disability one of the central issues towards development in a recent report. At a meeting in September 2013: *The way forward: a disability inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond* (United Nations, 2013) it was pointed out that in the goal of MGDs to eradicate global poverty, the needs of people with disabilities have not been addressed. It is pointed out that PWDs are still excluded from equitable access to education, employment and social support systems, to name a few. It was stressed that to realize the objectives of full and equal participation of persons with disabilities there is a need for greater efforts (UN Enable, 2013).

The 2013 report of UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children*, was devoted to issues around disability: *Children with disabilities*. It stresses the importance of counting children with disabilities and address their needs. It is pointed out that statistics on children with disabilities tend to be poor because many countries do not have reliable information on numbers on PWD or on how a disability affects a person. It is pointed out that many children with disabilities might not even be registered because parents may be ashamed of their child. This makes it very difficult for development projects to reach disadvantaged children and makes planning very difficult (UNICEF, 2013).

According to the *World Report on Disability*, policy and legislation can improve access and participation of people with disability (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). The role of political and civil rights, including open discussions, debates and participatory politics, can be effective, though it has been shown to be more effective in some places than others. It can be helpful to have a universal declaration to make authorities

responsible and accountable to their citizens. For minorities, especially those who have experience colonisation such rights can be a very useful way to fight against oppression.

This theoretical framework has been provided as a background to understand the issues of deafness and empowerment as a foundation for the case study in Namibia. The focus has been on Deaf individuals creating a community where the history of education and experience of oppression is considered as shaping the identity of Deaf people. Next chapter frames the research in the settings of Namibia where the research was carried out. As an important part of the research, the general situation of Namibia is discussed, including the educational system, before moving into the specific situation of Deaf people in Namibia.

2 Setting: Namibia

The field chosen for this research was the Deaf community in Namibia. This was considered a suitable location for several reasons. Firstly, it was chosen because of a connection of the researcher to Namibia through the SignWiki project and secondly because it fits the theoretical task; to research empowerment of Deaf in a developing country. Namibia is located in southern sub-Saharan Africa, with its western border to



the Atlantic Ocean, it shares borders with Angola and Zambia to north, Botswana to the east and South-Africa to the south. The land covers around 800.000km² placing it as the 34th largest country in the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013). It is sparsely populated with 2,2 million people (estimated by the World Bank 2012), having the lowest population density in sub-Saharan Africa or an average of 2,5 persons per square kilometre while the sub-Saharan region as a whole has an average of 34 persons per square kilometre (World Bank, 2009). The very low population might be explained by a big area of desert and most of the land is dry or semi-arid rangeland with low rates of rainfall that is unsuitable for agricultural production (Kaapama, 2007). Namibia is the driest country in sub-Saharan Africa with no perennial rivers or other permanent water body and the Namib Desert is Africa's second largest desert (World Bank, 2009). The climate is subtropical desert climate where temperature ranges from very cold to very hot depending on height above sea level and time of year. In the summer time, from December to March, the average temperature is around

25-35 degrees Celsius during day time, depending on location, in the deserts it goes well over 45 C. In the winter time July-August the average is 15-25 C. Nights are colder 0-10 C and frost is possible, especially in high areas and deserts (McIntyre, 2007).

The population of Namibia is relatively young with close to 37% being under 15 years of age (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2011). Most of the people live in rural areas or around 1,2 million but about 900 thousand in urban areas. The working age population has increasingly immigrated to urban areas whereas more than half of the children and the elderly live in rural areas. Urban population grew by 49,7% over the period from 2001-2011, while in rural areas there was a 1,4% reduction (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2011). People in Namibia are of diverse ethnic groups, the Owambo being by far the largest group or about half the population. Other groups are for example The San people, Caprivian, Damara, Herero, Himba, Kavango, and then there are “white Namibians” originally from Europe, mostly from German, the former colonizer (McIntyre, 2007). The official language used to be German, Afrikaans and English but after 1990 it was reduced to only English. Several other languages are spoken, or around 28 different languages, Oshiwambo being the mother tongue of approximately half of the population. The main faith is Christianity (which came with missionaries in the 1800s) but other religions are practiced as well. The mining sector is the largest source of foreign exchange earnings, gem quality diamond production is one of the largest in the world. Agriculture is important and tourism is a growing industry, now in the third place of the country’s foreign exchange earner. After independence, the fishing industry has also been growing (World Bank, 2009).

2.1 History

It is believed that the first inhabitants of Namibia were hunter-gatherers who were joined by the Nama people and later on the Damara in the 9th century. In the 16th century the Bantu-speaking people: the Herero, immigrated and brought development of agriculture with them. The first Europeans that

arrived to Namibia were the Portuguese in 1484 but in 1884, when Europe was taking over Africa, Namibia became a German colony, known as German South-West Africa, except for Walvis bay that continued to be British (McIntyre, 2007).

In the World War I, South Africa took over the land of Namibia and it became a South African colony. Namibia was actually never formally included in South Africa but the white minority had a representative at the parliament in South Africa. In 1961-1968 the UN tried to establish the area as independent but the legal pressure didn't work. Namibians with support from South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) started fighting for freedom. In 1968 the UN declared the occupation of South Africa over the land as illegal and changed the name to Namibia. Internal economic factors played their part in the political arena, the black majority of Africans (90% of the population) consumed only 12,8% of the gross domestic product (GDP) while the white minority gained 81,5% of the GDP. The South African economy had benefitted from the Namibian economy and it was not until 1988 in December the New-York negotiation was signed which included an agreement that South Africa would give Namibia up to the UN. The process towards independence started in 1989 with an election that SWAPO won decisively. A new constitution was written and Sam Nujoma became the president of Namibia. In 2005, President Hifikepunye won the presidential election and remains president to date (McIntyre, 2007).

2.2 Situation

The United Nations Development Programme compiles the Human Development Index yearly as a way to measure long-term progress in three basic dimensions: long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. In 2012, Namibia was ranked in the group of medium human development, ranked 128 of all countries (187 countries and territories) with HDI value 0,608. Sub-Saharan Africa had an average of 0,475, the lowest rate of regions in the world. Of the countries in the

category of medium human development, Namibia is below the average of 0,64 but is above the average for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The global average HDI value was 0,694 (UNDP, 2013:154). The index of human development is intended to give an idea of the development of different countries, the relationship of income and well-being. It is not comprehensive, but measures life expectancy, attainment in education and command over the resources that are needed for decent living. In Namibia, life expectancy is estimated to be average 62,6 years by the HDR. From 1980 to 2012 this number has increased by 4,7 years (UNDP, 2013b).

Since Namibia gained independency there has been some political stability with multiparty democracy and elections held regularly. There has been success in the transition from the apartheid rule to democracy (McIntyre, 2007). The apartheid policies created a highly dualistic society and wealth was in hands of the white elites. But much work has been carried out to address this inequality with some positive progress in different areas, for instance more respect for human rights and fairly contained level of corruption. The constitution of Namibia is considered one of the most liberal in Africa and the country is on the top of the list over African countries concerning financial system. Poverty has declined and Namibia is one of few sub-Saharan countries that have a quite good social system. This includes safety net for the elderly, people with disability, orphans, vulnerable children and war veterans. They provide maternity leave, sick leave and medical benefits. Education has been made more equal and primary health care coverage is quite widespread. Namibia has spent a good share of their GDP on education and health, compared to other African countries (World Bank, 2009).

But there are still many difficult challenges. Poverty continues to be high and wealth is unequally distributed between people. By international standard estimated by the UNDP in 2012, 31,9 % of the population were living on less than 1,25 dollar a day (UNDP, 2013:160). The HIV virus has affected the country seriously and HIV infection rates were among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa and in the world with the consequences that life expectancy has dropped. In 2003 it was estimated that around 21,3 % of

the population was affected by HIV and many children were left orphaned (McIntyre, 2007:15). Tuberculosis has also affected the country and Namibia was number three on the list over the worst TB-affected countries in the world. Furthermore, despite education being available, the fact remains that many adults are illiterate, suggesting that the education system is not catering for all. Unemployment is also a big problem, particularly among young people and especially for those who have not completed secondary, there the unemployment rate is over 30%. There is still some lack of industrial development and lots of manufactured goods come from South Africa (World Bank, 2009).

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is meant to identify multiple deprivations of the same household with regards of the following the dimensions: education, health and standard of living. It was calculated with statistical information from 2006-7 that 39,6% of the Namibian nation counted as multidimensionally poor and 23,6% as close or in risk of multiple deprivations (UNDP, 2013b). The income poverty (PPP – population living below US\$1,25 a day) does therefore not tell the whole story. It needs to be realized that the multidimensional poverty is 7,7 % points higher than income poverty which implies that person can be living above the poverty line but experience other deprivation, for example in education, employment or other aspects (UNDP, 2013).

Despite Namibia being categorized as a middle-income country and despite the fact that the country has made some progress since independence it is among the most unequal societies in the world. It has one of the highest Income Gini coefficient estimated by the World Bank. The Gini coefficient is a tool to measure inequality by measuring the deviation from a perfectly equal distribution of income among individuals or households. The value zero means absolute equality while 100 means full inequality. Namibia has a Gini index of 63,9 which is one of the highest score in the world (among South Africa) (UNDP, 2013:154).

2.3 Conventions and policies on disability

2.3.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of PWD

The 1990 Namibian Constitution recognizes human rights and freedom of all citizens. The Government signed *the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in April 2007 and ratified it (including the Optional Protocol) in December the same year.

2.3.2 National Disability Policy 1997

The Namibian government developed a *National Disability Policy in 1997* (Government of Namibia, 2004). The objective of that policy is to ensure that all people with disability have an opportunity to participate in mainstream contemporary society given the services needed. This policy embeds the idea of inclusive education – which is a recently developed philosophy in education, which entails that all children should attain the mainstream school system. The policy also recognized the need of people with disabilities being provided with employment opportunities. *National Policy on Disability 1997* follows the social view on disability. The policy is based on ideas of equalization of opportunities, inclusion and integration. It links disability issues to human rights and development.

2.3.3 The National Disability Council Act 2004

The National Disability Council Act 2004 was passed to monitor the implementation of the *National Policy on Disability* from 1997. It is meant to identify provision of legislation that may hinder the implementation and comment on those legislation that affect people with disabilities. It should also give support to organizations working with disability and take necessary steps to improve the situation of people with disability in Namibia. The Act emphasis on the social view on disability and on integration for all persons. Furthermore it emphasis that all information, service and documentation should be accessible in a language people can understand, including sign language for Deaf people. Different target groups are identified that experience double discrimination, for example women

with disabilities, children with disabilities and people with disabilities in rural areas.

2.3.4 Vision 2030

Namibia developed a national development strategy in 2004, *Vision 2030*, to address the challenges of unemployment and inequality in society. It is a document which outlines ways to achieve certain national development objectives. There are eight themes to be realized in long term including social welfare, health and development, knowledge and technology. The vision sets goals for the future which are intended to improve the lives of the citizens to a level of the developed world by 2030. It is concerned with social, economic and overall well-being. People are to have high standards of living, a good quality of life, have access to education, health and other services. Importantly, Vision 2030 is expected to reduce inequalities. It is mentioned that different groups of people, man and women and of different ethnic groups should be treated equally. Furthermore it is mentioned that different abilities should not discriminate people (The Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2004).

2.3.5 Other agreements and legislation

Namibia has implemented other legislations, including: *Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948*, *Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1959*, *Declaration on Social Progress and Development*, *Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade for People with Disabilities 1992*. Namibia's parliament also passed an Act: *Affirmative Action (Employment) Act 29* in 1998, that introduced means to create equity in the workplace which stresses that it should benefit people with disabilities. Namibia also provides grants for those who are unable to work and is one of few African countries to do so, this includes that people with disability receive a disability grant.

2.3.6 Disability and the policy environment

All these agreements (and more) have to do with protecting the rights of people with disabilities to some extent. Still, it is maintained that people with disabilities are discriminated against in Namibia, they are marginalized and excluded and their human rights continue to be violated (Lang et al., 2008; Eide, Rooy, & Loeb, 2003). A research on the status of people with disabilities in four countries in Africa, including Namibia was carried out by a team of researchers in 2008 led by Raymond Lang. Their conclusion was that despite several legislation on disability in Namibia the reality is not as could be expected. The majority of children with disabilities, especially those living in rural areas were not attending school at the time, nor were they receiving any formal education. It was actually rather an exception than the rule that a child with disabilities went to school. The government did not have an effective administrative infrastructure for carrying out appropriate training for teachers and staff in mainstream schools to be able to cater for children with disabilities. Lang et al. point out that the geographical terrain of Namibia makes it hard to provide service for people with disabilities (Lang et al., 2008). A research in 2012 carried out by *Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa* (OSISA) supports these findings. According to the report the situation in employment for people with disability continues to lag behind despite the *Employment Act* in Namibia. Furthermore, even though the government provides disability grants, in terms of living standard this amount has to count as inadequate to provide for basic needs (Lang et al., 2008; Kotzé, 2012).

Lang et al. (2008) argue that the administration and infrastructure needed to ensure that people with disability fully enjoy human rights in Namibia is not supported with political will. They stress the importance that those who work within the disability sector work together with people in the government to make an effective system of administration. There is a need for more dialogue between those parties, those who make the policy and DPOs and the civil society, so they can understand the worldview of one another. Legislation, policies and conventions are important but with a weak administrative infrastructure to carry out the implementation of those

policies become ineffective. The consequence is that people with disabilities continue to be excluded, marginalized and poor.

The implementation of human rights with regards to disability thus remains a challenge in Namibia. Many people with disability do not know their rights nor are they familiar with the Convention on disability or their right to receive disability benefits. People with disabilities in Namibia, and in the whole world to some extent, tend to have low level of education and have limited access to information (Lang, et al., 2008; Kotzé, 2012). They remain one of the most vulnerable groups in the society of Namibia and few individuals with disability are visible in the public sphere. As in other countries the majority of people in Namibia do not know sign language, including people working in public services and even teachers of Deaf. The need for Deaf children to have sign language is still not widely understood and therefore the Deaf are considered to need special attention (Kotzé, 2012). Lang et al. (2008) argue that among politicians it is the lack of understanding and the lack of will to understand the situation of people with disabilities, plus the negative attitudes that limit the implementation of a right-based agenda to disability. The excuse for not putting forward the measures are linked to limited financial resources but Kotzé (2012) argues it might in fact be a general reluctance to address issues on disability in a serious manner. But if a country ratifies the Convention it is by international law bound to its provision and disability organizations should closely monitor the process.

2.3.7 People with disabilities

As is clear from the Gini Coefficient, the society of Namibia is unequal in terms of income and employment. People do not have the same opportunities and there is a big gap between the rich and the poor. Unemployment rates are high and the situation is worst in rural areas. Women and young people are more likely to be unemployed especially those who are not educated. The situation for people with disability is exacerbated as they experience double disadvantage – living in poverty makes it impossible to utilize the opportunities available to achieve their

potential and also they are stigmatized because of ignorance in the society (World Health Organization, 2012).

In 2011, *The Population and Housing Census Indicators* estimated that people with disabilities in Namibia were 4,7% of the population. The Census defined disability as a condition either present from birth or developed during a person's lifetime: "a long-term physical, psychological or mental condition that limits a person from carrying out everyday activities at home, work or school" (Namibia Statistics Agency 2011:53). There were ten types of different disabilities distinguished, including deafness, hearing difficulties, mute/dumb and speech impairment. The rate of disability was counted to be higher in rural areas (5,7% of people with disabilities) than in urban areas (3,3% of people with disabilities). The ratio between men and women with disability was similar, 4,8% male and 4,6% female. In the physical impairment category, a lower limb was the most frequent disability (22,6% of people with disabilities) and the second one was visual impairment (17,5 % of people with disabilities). In total 9 % of people with disabilities indicated that they were affected by two types of disability – and close to 2% of people with disabilities with three types (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2011).

A survey, *Living conditions among people with activity limitations in Namibia: a representative National survey*, published by SINTEF (2003), a Norwegian based research institute suggests that people with disabilities in Namibia are lagging behind others. The results showed that fewer children with disabilities attended schools. People with sensory impairment, i.e. with seeing or hearing impairment or communication problems appeared to be especially vulnerable in terms of attendance in education. This indicates that the schools are not well adapted to the needs of people with sensory impairment. There appeared to be higher proportion of people with disabilities with no written language skills compared to people without disabilities. Unemployment rates among people with disabilities were very high and in that regard people with sensory impairment were also among the highest proportion (Eide, Rooy, & Loeb, 2003).

It is necessary to point out that it is believed that data in sub-Saharan Africa underestimates the number of people living with disability because of stigma and negative attitudes towards disability affecting the data gathering. Even though questions on disability are included in the National Census it is questionable how robust this data is and whether it can provide accurate analysis of the social, political and economic situation. There has also been debate in the sector of disability whether such data is useful (Lang et al., 2008). Importantly, the phrasing of questions in data collection may affect the answers. But UNICEF has emphasized that such data is important since it makes research of disability possible and assists in finding strategies to address issues on disability (UNICEF, 2013). It is recognized in this context that there might be children with disabilities that are not registered. As argued by a former Director General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Lee Jong Wook, “to make people count, we first need to be able to count people” (World Health Organization, 2003). Since Namibia has ratified the *Convention on rights of people with disability* it is important to be able to see what progress is made and what is still lacking behind with reference to each article of the Convention. Statistical data is also important for governments to be able to design and provide public service needed (Lang et al., 2008) as well as to measure progress and results from the programs implemented.

2.3.8 Deaf in Southern Africa and Namibia

In the 2011 Namibia Housing Census, the total number of deaf people was estimated as 6.257 (3.196 female and 3.061 male). The division between urban and rural areas is less among Deaf people than people with disability on the whole whereas slightly more Deaf are living in urban areas. People experiencing hearing difficulties were total 9.440 (5.218 female and 4.222 male) (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2011). People with mild hearing impairment to profoundly Deaf are in total around 15.600. In the Census there are also counted people that are referred as Mute/Dumb 5.908 and people with speech impairment 6.056. It can be added that the reference “dumb” is seen as an old, inaccurate and offensive concept within the Deaf

field. These terms are not explained further so those individuals might also have a hearing impairment making the number of Deaf unclear. It can be deducted that the number goes from around 15 thousand to 27 thousand. In the Census 2001 Deaf were counted roughly 18.000 without any further distinction (Bjarnason, Stefánsdóttir & Beukes, 2012).

2.3.9 Education

Namibia has been described as a very unequal society as is clear from the Gini coefficient. This may partly be traced back to the time of the apartheid ideology where there was segregation between ethnic and racial lines. The apartheid policy created inequalities and disparities in education service for different ethnic groups. After the colonial time it was a big challenge to create a new education system to introduce quality education for all. The content and pedagogy of the colonial education was not suitable for Namibians. The *Ministry of Education* started reforming the system with the aim of providing equal quality democracy learning. According to the *National Report on Development of Education in Namibia* there has been some progress towards making education equal for all children. Primary education is compulsory and free of charge for children aged 6-16 years as stated in the *Constitution of Namibia*, Article 20:

- (1) All persons shall have the right to education.
- (2) Primary education shall be compulsory and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining State schools at which primary education will be provided free of charge.

The formal school system is in total 12 years, four years in lower primary (grades 1-4) with the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Next is upper primary for three years (5-7), then junior secondary (8-10) and then two years senior secondary (grades 11-12). English becomes the medium of teaching from fourth grade onwards. There is also pre-primary school for

children under six years of age. Pupils are only allowed to repeat a grade once in each school phase. There are exceptions that can allow a student to repeat class 10, but the policy is that a learner that fails minimum entry points to Grade 11 is encouraged to go and study at the Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL). That gives them opportunity to complete formal education and upgrade their points and then re-join the formal education system (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2004). After Grade 10 students can enter into Senior Secondary or other education such as vocational training, distance learning or go straight to employment (Ministry of Education, 2010). The secondary school level is limited. The transition rate from Grade 10 to 11 is determined by points and the places available at Senior Secondary level are allowing for about 50% transition (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2004). Post-secondary education of higher learning is available for example at the University of Namibia, International University of Management, Polytechnic of Namibia, Colleges of Education (now part of UNAM) and vocational training centres (Ministry of Education, 2008).

From 1980-2012, total years of schooling attendance measured by HDI, has increased by 1,9 years from 4,3 years in 1980 to 6,2 in 2012. Expected years of schooling have increased by 0,2 years or from 11,1 in 1990 to 11,3 in 2012. Population receiving at least secondary education in 2012, was 33% among females and 34% among males (UNDP, 2013). Of people aged over 15 years, 66% had already left school and only 17% were still attending school. Employment rates: 63% of 15 years old and older were employed, 37% unemployed (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2011).

According to the Namibia Population and Housing Census 2011 literacy among Namibians for the age of 15 and over was 89%. There is no significant difference between literacy among men and women but literacy is higher in urban areas, 93% while in rural areas it is 79%. When leaving school, 49% of the total population had completed primary education, 21% had completed secondary education. But one out of three Namibians either left school or did not complete primary education or never had any formal education. Only 6% of the total population completed tertiary education. At

the age of 7-14 years, an enrolment rate in education is over 80%. After 17 years it drops down to 70% and continues downward, and is less than 3% for the age group of 24 years old. The gender division reveals that until the age of 18 girls are more likely to be in schools, after 18 there are more boys (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2011). Opposite to many other developing countries the attendance to primary school is equal among both genders. But the *National Report on the Development of Education in Namibia 2004* argues that the school system is male dominated as fewer women are in higher positions and tend to teach at lower levels. The schools are also poorly equipped, and do not offer a conducive learning environment, many schools do not have toilets facilities, telephones or electricity. Some are “traditional”, stick and mud metal sheets and tents and open air classrooms which are difficult to teach in during the rainy seasons (Ministry of Education, 2008).

2.3.10 Education for children and people with disabilities

The Ministry of Education in Namibia has responsibilities to make sure that children and adults with disabilities are integrated in mainstream education. The *National Policy on Disability* states: “The Government shall ensure that children and youth with disabilities have the same right to education as children without disabilities”.

2.3.11 Inclusive education

It is stated in the UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Article 24, that inclusive education shall be available to all. The National Policy in Namibia emphasizes inclusive education and states that every child should benefit from attending mainstream primary school. The aim of inclusive education is that mainstream schools can provide for all children, including those with disability or other special needs. Physical and social environment of the schools is supposed to be conducive for all students, no matter what their ability might be able to attend mainstream schools. All teaching materials and correct learning aids should be available in schools. But to make this ideology possible it is not enough to have accessible

facilities, the teachers also have to understand what inclusive education stands for. It follows that teachers with special training are required for inclusive education to work, teachers who can identify the needs of individuals especially those who have some kind of impairment, should be appointed in each school (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Namibia has committed to make provisions for all children in education, no matter their special educational needs. But there are still challenges when it comes to education for children with disabilities. Those children are in few special schools and barriers are many. Negative attitudes and stereotypes have to be addressed among peers, teachers and communities. Teachers in mainstream schools need to be trained to care for PWD. As of today, children with disabilities are in special classes in mainstream schools or in special schools. But both these solutions do not fully cover the needs of all children because of shortage of places. It is believed that many children with special needs are not cared for (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2004).

Many Deaf individuals have expressed their concerns about the policy of inclusive education. It has been a very complex and controversial matter all over the world (Adoyo, 2008; Stinson & Antia, 1999). Deaf people have argued for the right of Deaf learners to be in separate schools where sign language and Deaf culture flourishes (Adoyo, 2008). Deaf children experience obstacles in communication and that makes it hard for them to stay in mainstream schools as few teachers and classmates know sign language (Kotzé, 2012). Students with hearing impairment may miss out in communication and be socially isolated, both those who have mild to medium hearing impairment that do not use interpreter and those who are Deaf and use an interpreter. Students with mild hearing loss may experience difficulty in group conversation when more than one person is talking, difficulty in placing who is talking, environmental noise may also cause disturbance and make it hard to hear speakers. Deaf that use interpreters also miss out, they may find that the inevitable lag time of the interpreter limits the option to participate or answer questions (Adoyo, 2008; Stinson & Antia, 1999). The education system needs to be flexible in order to cater for

the needs of the Deaf. Deaf children have special needs that may be difficult to attend to within the inclusive settings. Some Deaf might benefit from inclusive education and choose that over special schools, but there are also Deaf that thrive better in special schools or schools for the Deaf (Adoyo, 2008).

If inclusion education is to benefit the Deaf, leading to social development, there is need for more awareness. Teachers in mainstream schools need to be educated about deafness, learn sign language and get support to teach Deaf children from professional or specially trained teacher in issues of disability or deafness (Adoyo, 2008). Furthermore the Deaf culture has to be respected and valued. Adoyo (2008) stresses that the policy of inclusion should acknowledge the need of Deaf children to interact with others that speak their language. It is important to have role models and Deaf children should meet Deaf adults because that social contact is essential for the child to develop socially, emotionally and linguistically. Education should be available in sign language and Deaf should be hired at the schools to give the children support. Whereas the school system is not fully capable to implement inclusive education that benefits all, there is still need for different options: special schools, special units, or other arrangements so that education can benefit all children whatever their circumstances.

2.3.12 Deaf education

The story of education of Deaf in Namibia is relatively recent. As mentioned above, Namibia gained independence in 1990 after being under the rule of the apartheid policy of South Africa. In that situation most of the black majority had little to no education. The first school for children with disability was for white children and was established in 1970, Dagbreek Special School, but after independence it started including other ethnic groups as well. The first school for Deaf was Engela, started by the Evangelical Lutheran Church around 1970. Another school for Deaf (which was also for the blind) was Eluwa School in north (Ongwediva) established in 1973 by the South African authority and the students at Engela under the

age of seventeen (in total 12 Deaf) were transferred to the new school (Ashipala et al., 1994). At the beginning there were 20 Deaf learners and 20 blind learners at Eluwa, but in 1995 there were 172 Deaf, 70 blind and eight physically disabled learners enrolled in the school (Reynolds & Fletcher-Janzen, 2007).

In the Engela School, around 1970, the teachers used Simultaneous Communication (a method where signs are used following voiced language) following the word order of the Oshiwambo language. The first teachers at Engela had been trained in South Africa where they learnt a sign system called Paget-Gorman system that is not based on natural sign language. It was invented by a hearing English man as a way to teach Deaf children. It is believed that Deaf in Namibia developed the Namibian sign language in communication between one another similar to other places in the world. It has been noted by a former Deaf student at Engela that the children used the same signs as the teachers but the difference was that between themselves the language did not follow the word order of the spoken language as it did inside classrooms. The same was the situation for the Deaf adults who worked there – their sign language did not follow the word order of Oshiwambo (Ashipala et al., 1994).

NISE, National Institute for Special Education School for the Hearing Impaired Windhoek, started in 1995 with ten learners and one teacher. In addition there is a Deaf Unit in Katima (Caprivi District), in Rundu (Kavango District) and in Eenhana (Ohangwena District) located within mainstream schools. Now there are eight schools and units, all together, that provide education for Deaf (Ellis, 2011). There is one Preschool for Deaf in Namibia, operated by *The Association for Children with Language, Speech and Hearing Impairments of Namibia* (CLaSH).

In 2010 there were only 495 Deaf learners in schools and not known how many Deaf were out of school (Ellis, & Yates, 2010). In 2010 the Deaf children were estimated to be roughly 4.000 (Ellis, 2011) and it can therefore be deducted that many Deaf children are not within the formal educational system, or are in mainstream schools where their needs are not met. In 2010 there were no Deaf students in tertiary institution and there is

only one Deaf person that has succeeded to go to University and receive a Bachelor degree (Ellis, & Yates, 2010). Even now in 2014 there have not been other students that have accomplished that far in educational attainment.

In Namibia, as noted above, the Deaf have the right to education according to the Constitution. In the *National Curriculum to Basic Education*, mother tongue is valued as important for Deaf children. It is stated that language is the tool for thinking, the most important means of communication and an aspect of identity and basis for culture. Given the variety in languages and dialects throughout the country this issue has to be tackled in education. The different languages in Namibia are considered to carry a valuable culture that should be protected (Ministry of Education, 2010). The mother tongue is seen as especially important in Pre-Primary and Lower Primary phases for children to gain understanding, concept formation and literacy. It is stressed that mother tongue should be the medium of teaching phases up to Primary Grade 1-3 of education. Since English is the official language it is also thought to be of high value and becomes the medium language in teaching when children get older. The Namibian Sign Language is also acknowledged: “The Languages learning area comprises Mother Tongues/First Languages (Pre-Primary to Grade 12: Second Languages (Grades 1-12): and Foreign Languages (Grades 8-12), as well as Namibian Sign Language” (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Students with special needs should get special attention and the need Deaf have for sign language is clearly laid out in the *National Curriculum for Basic Education*. It is mentioned that Deaf learners should learn Namibian Sign Language and use English for writing. It is also acknowledged that the learning environment and teaching methods may not benefit children with hearing impairment and that they may require special arrangements. It does not seem to be clear that Deaf have the right of an interpreter but in the curriculum sign language interpreters are recommended where school has Deaf students. It is recognized that it may not benefit all students to be integrated into mainstream school but it is stressed that it is only in certain cases when the disability is severe that

special needs education will be provided. It is, however, reiterated in the curriculum that the aim is to give education to the learner in the most successful way with the goal for that individual to be able to have full inclusion in the society (Ministry of Education, 2010).

2.3.13 Development project for the Deaf

A development project in Deaf education entitled “*Signs Speak as Loud as Words*” was implemented in Namibia from 2007 to 2010. It was carried out by the *Icelandic International Development Agency* (ICEIDA) in co-operation with the *Ministry of Education* in Namibia and *Communication Centre of Deaf and Hard of Hearing* in Iceland (SHH). ICEIDA assisted the Ministry with funding and technical assistance. The overall aim of the project was to empower the Deaf and enhance their participation in society, with the rationale being that Deaf people were one of the most marginalized groups in the country. The emphasis was on participation of Deaf people and strengthening the structures in government and services to contribute to equal rights. The project included training of teachers and interpreters and material support, such as teaching material, salaries, scholarships, computers and buildings. There was a strong emphasis on supporting the establishment of the *Centre of Communication and Deaf Studies* to research and promotion of sign language, as well as improving services of interpreters and Deaf instructors and strengthen Deaf education in general. The aims of the project were: development of the Namibian Sign Language, improving education of Deaf children, increasing access for Deaf into the main society, capacity building at NGO level (Ministry of Education & ICEIDA, 2007). The output of the project were various, in total there were forty sign language interpreters trained, 22 Deaf NSL instructors, twelve Literacy promoters, two interpreter trainers, several teachers, 50 caregivers trained on inclusive education of Deaf children, ten young Deaf adults trained as educators and seventeen Deaf and hearing actors trained in Deaf theatre (Bjarnason & Beukes, no year).

An external evaluation report was made on the project and the main conclusion was that the project was successful in achieving its overall

objective. It contributed to the empowerment of Deaf in Namibia and inclusion into mainstream society, particularly through improvement in education. There was a positive impact, meaning that all the intended beneficiaries are considered to be in a better position than before. In terms of its sustainability it was successful since almost all the staff members and interpreters who were paid by ICEIDA were employed in government or other agencies after the program support ceased. The evaluation reports stated that progress had been made in overcoming prejudices against people with disabilities and Deaf people had developed their social capital and strengthened NSL and Namibian Deaf culture. The downside of the conclusion was that there is still a long way to go in the development of bilingual education in both NSL and English. Gap was found in implementation and an effective strategy had not yet been developed for early identification of Deaf children and subsequent support and pre-school education. There were reasons to believe that many Deaf children still remained excluded from education (Ellis, 2011).

NNAD started training interpreters in 1998 (Wilson, 2005b) and before the start of the ICEIDA project there were eight trained interpreters. But they were not formally trained as professional interpreters. It was not until in 2006, with the ICEIDA project that formal training of sign language interpreters began. The project trained forty sign language interpreters, many of whom worked as teachers for the Deaf (Bjarnason et al., 2012). In the beginning of the training of interpreters it was formal training courses but later it emerged as a subject with the University of Namibia. Now the University has taken over training of interpreters. The new degree is a four years program but it is a degree as a teacher/interpreter. This means that it qualifies graduates to work as teachers and interpreters if there are Deaf children in the class.

This current thesis is to explore in more depth the experience of the participants and what factors they believe are the most important in development for Deaf. What meaning the concept empowerment has had on the society of Deaf in Namibia and how the project empowered Deaf individuals? What were the effects on their lives, identity and how they

envision their own future? The next chapter outlines how the researcher gained the information required for this analysis.

3 Methodology

The method chosen for this research was a qualitative method incorporating a participatory approach. Individuals of the Deaf community were interviewed along with a few hearing individuals that work within the deafness and disability sector in Namibia. This chapter explains the choice of topic and the methodology; the process of the research, the interviews and observation. The limitations of the research are also addressed. Furthermore the status of the researcher and possible influence of her attitudes on the interviews and on the process of analysis and conclusions are reviewed. There are special considerations that must be had in mind when carrying out a research on a linguistic minority, especially when a part of the research is carried out in a language that is foreign to the researcher. The implications of using an interpreter are important to this thesis so a section is spent on discussing those matters.

3.1 Choosing the topic

As Akhil Gupta and James Fergusson (1997) point out, a selection of a good field is not only based on funding availability but also on suitability for the selected topic. The chosen field should address pertinent issues and debates that matter to the discipline. The selection of a particular population for ethnographic research is ordinarily related to some unanswered question or a particular problem (Barnard & Spencer 1996, Gupta & Fergusson 1997). Namibia is an interesting field for research on empowerment of Deaf because of the development project *Signs Speak as Loud as Sounds*, which was carried out for four years, aiming at empowerment of Deaf. The effects of that project make an interesting case to learn from. The field fitted the description of a good field where the question remained: can a development project really contribute to the empowerment of a minority with special needs? The choice of the topic for this Master's thesis is based on the

interest of the researcher in sign language and the Deaf community as well as on academic background. Lastly, researches like this one are important because there have been few such investigations carried out on Deaf as a linguistic minority in development. As is clear from recent reports on the MDGs and from UNICEF, disability issues are now getting more attention and this includes Deaf as a minority and their rights. This research is therefore relevant to present day discussions on development priorities.

The choice of the central topic of empowerment and deploying the theories of Sen (1999) was decided in cooperation with the mentors of the research. Because of the history of Deaf, their experience of oppression and exclusion, the concept empowerment was seen as viable theme to frame the investigation. The concept was also one of the themes in the ICEIDA development project and is widely used and discussed in development studies today.

As Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer (1996) point out, personal connections of the researcher to a particular place or topic also shape the choice. The researcher made a connection with Namibia through the SignWiki information technology project, because of her employment as sign language interpreter at the Communication Centre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Iceland (SHH). SignWiki which was launched at SHH in Iceland in 2012, is a new collaborative web for collecting, analysing and informing people about sign languages. It is a unique system with the aim of encouraging public participation. The idea of the project goes back to the ICEIDA project *Signs Speak as Loud as Words* in Namibia and is led by Valgerður Stefánsdóttir and Davíð Bjarnason who both worked in Namibia. The need for more support of development of sign languages in developing countries was the central idea behind the project (SignWiki, 2014). The vision of SignWiki is to increase empowerment and equity for Deaf people by strengthening sign languages. The aim from the beginning was to spread the project into other countries in the world, with developing countries as special target (SignWiki, 2014b). Now it has been established in six countries of the world: Iceland, Faroe Islands, Finland, Namibia, Norway and Tanzania. In 2012 the researcher of this thesis went to work as a co-

teacher with Árný Guðmundsdóttir, teaching usage of the SignWiki platform in Tanzania in June and later the same year in September in Namibia. It was decided in cooperation with the mentors of this research, Davíð Bjarnarson and Jónína Einarsdóttir, to use the opportunity to carry out the MA research in Namibia.

3.2 Entering the field

For ethnographic research it is inevitably necessary to have access to the research field (Murray & Overton, 2003). The researcher has to gain access to the community, live among the people to grasp their opinions about life and collect this data back to the academy at home. It is important how the researcher explains the project to participants and especially in negotiating access to participant observation (Crang & Cook 2007). The access of the researcher was established through connection with the ICEIDA project and further established through SignWiki teaching.

It was decided to carry out a research on the topic of empowerment in terms of what is relevant to the Deaf community in Namibia. Entering the field was relatively easy with the SignWiki training as a preparation. There some few key informants were met and the researcher was introduced to a Namibian sign language interpreter to assist with the interviews with the Deaf Namibians. These relationships with individuals working with Deaf education, so called gate keepers or key informants was important and helped a lot through the process. The interpreter and the head of CCDS assisted with identifying potential respondents and gave the researcher a contact list. The interpreter had relations to many of the Deaf interviewers that she connected with. At the beginning there was a fear of not being able to meet enough interviewers but at the end it turned out that a good number of people were willing to participate in the research. In the middle of the stay, 15 Deaf had already been interviewed and more individuals had been expecting to get interviewed and were eager to participate. Therefore in the end the research included a total of 29 respondents, 23 Deaf and six hearing

individuals. This was a group of different individuals in terms of age, sex, education, employment status and social status.

3.3 Ethnography

Ethnography is a “social scientific writing about particular folks” (Silverman, 2006:67). It is a process that is culturally diverse and contains a variety of perspectives. Ethnography is, most importantly, based on first-hand experience where the researcher or ethnographer usually carries out some fieldwork. The researcher goes into particular setting and explores a particular social and cultural community using methods that are often, though not always, based on participant observation. There are also other methods used, research techniques such as analysing spoken discourses, using visual materials such as films, life histories, formal or informal questions, interviews with individuals and collection of documents. The methods can be encompassed in case studies, multidimensional explorations, action research program, group discussion, clinical research or in feedback from members (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, Silverman 2006). In short, the researcher collects every data available to the issue that is the focus of the inquiry. Ethnography is originally a way of describing a community or culture that usually was located outside the West and still ethnography is a description of a society that is unfamiliar to the researcher. Ethnography refers to an integration of both first-hand investigation and the theoretical and comparative interpretation of social organization and culture. There are many ways and sub-fields in ethnography such as studying human social life or how life is different depending on location (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, Silverman 2006, Davies 2007).

The aim of ethnography is to document how people see and talk about their everyday life and social activities. Although it is preferred to get the experience where people are not much aware of the researcher, the researcher has to be honest about his/her role. The aim is still to get as „normal“ or „natural“ experience of the life in the community as possible, so the researcher has to be able to quickly and easily get into the natural

settings of social life. The researcher has to know what questions are appropriate, what is important and what to leave out or ignore. There are different ways to do ethnographical writing but the most important thing is that eventually the prospective reader can understand what the researchers did, why they did it, to whom they talked to and what they learnt (Barnard & Spencer, 1996).

An ethnography study with participatory approach was chosen. Data was gathered with qualitative approach and observation within the community of Deaf in Namibia and with interviews with individuals.

3.4 Data collection

The data collection for this thesis was carried out through field work in Namibia in September to October 2012. The data collected was qualitative, that is information was gathered through interviews and written field notes. Participation method was used and both formal and informal interviews with members of Deaf community and participants in the ICEIDA funded project. Most of the field work was conducted at the Centre for Communication and Deaf Studies (CCDS) in Namibia but also at the workplaces or homes of some of the interviewees. This was a qualitative research for the most part since this is a social research and the aim was to emerge with feelings, ideas, experience, opinions, attitudes, views and perspectives of the participants. As Martin Brett Davies (2007) points out, these kinds of information are impossible to obtain only with quantitative methods, such as questionnaire. The research questions are based on the views and experience of individuals and therefore it is necessary to get their response and comments. Secondary data, quantitative statistics about the status of Deaf in developing countries and in Namibia were collected during the study and used for analysis. The research was overt, that is participants were aware of the role of the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The researcher explained to the interviewees beforehand what the purpose of the interviews was and in case of Deaf this was interpreted by the interpreter.

Fieldwork can involve three different roles for the researcher: complete participant, participant observer or complete observer. The first one is where the researcher becomes member of the group without letting people know what he/she is really doing there. The last category is where the researcher does not participate at all, but the second aspect is a mixture of both. The researcher in this current research will be situated in the second category, as a participant observer. It was impossible for the researcher to be fully participating since the researcher is not Deaf and does not share basic experiences with the group – such as speaking sign language as mother tongue.

An important aspect of this study is that the research was undertaken in a foreign language (Murray & Overton, 2003). This research is socio-cultural in nature and without a good assistance from interpreters and other facilitators it is likely to fail. This issue will be further discussed in the chapter about ethics.

3.5 Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured (Davies, 2007). There were certain questions prepared, but the interviewers were encouraged to speak freely, creating more of a conversation rather than merely answers to questions. Most of the time this was successful, interviewers spoke freely and the researcher only asked questions once in a while. As Davies points out, interviews that are carried out for ethnographic purposes, i.e. where participant approach is used, are often unstructured, or close to “natural” conversations (Davis, 2007). Often when a research is carried out there are certain topics that the researcher wishes to explore and the researcher tends to direct the conversation in certain direction with the search for answers in mind. Semi-structured interviews are somewhere between fully structure (where certain set of questions are used and expected to be answered) and unstructured interviews, where an interview is mostly like a natural conversation. In semi-structured interviews there are certain arrangements made, time is formally decided and an interview is already prepared by the

researcher, either with a formal list of questions or informal ideas of what to ask. But opposite to structured interviews, the researcher is free to alter the questions whenever it feels appropriate to do so as some questions might seem inappropriate. New topics may be introduced in the process (Hammersly & Atkinson, 2007) and interviewees are encouraged to talk freely about a subject of own choice and different approaches or ideas are welcomed. These types of interviews can either be with one individual at a time or as a group conversation. In group interviews the interviewees can interact with each other as well as the researcher (Davies, 2007).

The interviews were often emotional, the Deaf individuals expressed frustration, disappointment, powerlessness, sadness and some were on the edge of giving up their fight. The respondents expressed many emotions, which encompassed both accomplishments and failures. They were enthusiastic to express their opinions and thoughts and as earlier mentioned, the respondents turned out to be more than initially anticipated. It was felt that some were eager to deliver express opinions and they hoped this could make a difference in their country.

3.6 Participants

There were in total 29 interviews carried out. The majority were Deaf or a total of 23: 12 who participated in the ICEIDA project and 11 who did not. Hearing interviewees were six in total: from the University, Ministry of Education, the kindergarten CLaSH, a sign language interpreter and two at a vocational training centre for people with disabilities, one working at the office and one was a teacher. The interviewee's group was diverse, both sexes and different age groups. Some had years of experience, some had been living in other countries and told stories of lives of Deaf there and compared to Namibia.

The Deaf informants were of different age (youngest around 20) up to senior citizens. This means that they grew up in different times and circumstances. They lost their hearing at different ages, some were born Deaf, others came Deaf at young age, few at older age (above five years)

and two of them became Deaf around the age of twenty years. The cause of the deafness varied from sickness, accidents, genetic reasons and unknown reasons. All of them were born to hearing parents and none of them had Deaf siblings. Most were profoundly Deaf but some were hard of hearing. All of them had in common that they considered themselves as being part of a minority, the minority of Deaf in Namibia. This became clear through opinions and consideration towards deafness.

All the participants were made clearly aware of the purpose of the study before the interview began, who the researcher was and that the data collected would only be used for the purpose of the research. Some of the informants had already met the researcher before the interview while others had not. Some were connected through the SignWiki training or had seen the researcher around at the CCDS but the majority of them were connected with the researcher by the interpreter. If they were willing to be interviewed they either came to the CCDS or field trips were organized to visit them at their work place or home, which ever was considered was most comfortable for the respondents. Some felt uncomfortable to be interviewed at CCDS and their wish was respected. Hearing interviewers were selected in cooperation with the mentors of this research and the head of CCDS. They were connected to via email and were all visited at their workplaces.

It was made clear that individuals were not obliged to participate, they could change their mind and contact the researcher if they felt uncomfortable with any of the information shared. They were allowed to refuse to answer questions and were able to drop out of the process at any time. The interviewees were ensured of full confidentiality and their names are not included in the thesis. They were all asked for permission to have their interviews video recorded and were made sure of the fact that all the records would only be reviewed by the researcher for the purpose of this thesis. No participant refused video recording after it was made sure that the video would only be for the purpose of the research and not to be showed to anyone other than the researcher without asking permission. None of the interviewees showed any sign of discomfort due to the presence of the

camera, instead most of them seemed eager to share their opinions and feelings about the subject matter.

3.7 Interviews through a sign language interpreter

This research is socio-cultural in nature and without a good assistance from interpreters and other facilitators would have been likely to fail. In any interview there is a risk of misunderstanding and as pointed out by Davies (2007) the risk is even higher when the person taking the interview and the respondent do not speak the same language. Therefore, regardless of the research method chosen, there is a need for the researcher to keep language barriers in mind. As noted above, sign language is not international and therefore there are language barriers, because the researcher is Icelandic and the interviewees were either hearing Namibians or, and for the most part, Deaf Namibians. In the case where the communications was between the researcher and Deaf Namibians, a qualified interpreter was always present. Using an interpreter might be disturbing since it involves a third individual. In this case it was necessary because otherwise fluent communication is impossible and the informant cannot speak freely in his/her native language.

It is recognized that there are a few complications when a conversation is transmitted through an interpreter and certain arrangements should be thought of beforehand. This include that the interpreter is informed on subject that will be covered and the settings should be arranged so that the Deaf and the interpreter have a clear view of each other and the Deaf should also have a clear view of the researcher (Sfgov, 2013). This was done before the interviews, as the researcher and the interpreter had an interaction before interviews were carried out. The research was explained to the interpreter, what the interviews were supposed to cover and the aim of the research. In most cases here was time given to arrange the settings so that they were comfortable for everyone involved. When working through an interpreter it is understood that the interpreter is a few words behind the speaker and therefore time needs to be allowed for the Deaf to be able to access the

information in the questions asked. It was also kept in mind that it is tiring for the interpreter to work for a long period of time.

As the researcher had the help of an interpreter, there were always a minimum of three people in the settings. As pointed out by Janice H. Humphrey and Bob J. Alcorn (2001), it is necessary to give the role of an interpreter a thought. As much as an interpreter is a way of making Deaf capable of communicating with hearing society, an involvement of a third party in communication can be uncomfortable. With an interpreter there is a danger of invasion and loss of privacy (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001). The majority of the interviews were with individuals but there were five interviews where there was more than one interviewer. There were three interviews where participants were two, one where there were three in a group and one interview where there were four interviewed at same time. But it is important to note that in these cases the interviews were all interpreted through one interpreter so it was complicated to conduct a conversation where more than one person spoke at the same time (Sfgov, 2013).

There are three ways to keep record of interviews, written notes, audio-records or video-records (Davies, 2007). As noted above the interviews in this research were preferably video-record when suitable, because then both the voiced interpretation of the interpreter is heard and the sign language can be seen. But as Davies points out, video-recording may be impractical. It either involves the presence of a third party or a camera and the setting would therefore not be natural anymore and it might distract the interview. Richard J. Senghas and Leila Monaghan (2002) agree with the notion that in certain cases video recording can be inappropriate and also point out other challenges in the case of Deaf research. Because of absence of a sign language writing system, later transcription is made impossible. Thus, transcription systems of sign language remain a methodological challenge. In this case the transcriptions were made on the English interpretations of the interviews with the Deaf. The process of transcribing was listening to the English translation and looking at the expressions of the Deaf.

3.8 Ethics

In terms of a minority that has experienced marginalisation it is important that the ones who belong to the group of oppressors are aware of their position. According to Lane (1999), Deaf people seem to agree that a hearing person can never fully acquire a Deaf identity and become a full member of that community. A hearing person might have Deaf parents (CODA) or be a fluent sign language speaker, but that person will always have missed out on pure Deaf experience, the experience of growing up Deaf, attend Deaf school and be a part of an oppressed minority (Lane, 1999). For this research it is therefore important to keep the status of the researcher as a hearing person in mind. The researcher is a sign language interpreter and because of her academic background the issues of deafness are well understood. As further stressed through the theoretical part of the thesis the history of Deaf oppression from hearing people is an important thing to keep in mind. The researcher has a positive attitude towards Deaf that has developed through her education and work experience as a sign language interpreter. This might affect the process of the research, from the choice of topic and forming the questions to interpreting the answers and formulating the research findings. This personal experience and view of the researcher shapes the research as the thesis is based on the idea that Deaf belong to a special community and this should be recognized from the beginning. The thesis is based on the cultural view on Deaf and the perspectives of individuals who count themselves as part of a unique community in a positive way. Therefore some might see it as neutral only to some extent as little attention is paid to medical views towards deafness.

A research on interpreters carried out by Árný Guðmundsdóttir in her Master's thesis 2012, showed that Deaf consider it important that interpreters have a positive attitude towards deafness. Guðmundsdóttir interviewed Deaf sign language users that claimed that it was important that interpreters acknowledge the Deaf community and respect their culture. Deaf also found it important that interpreter showed interest in participating in the Deaf community (Guðmundsdóttir, 2012). The researcher has a good

understanding of what deafness from a social perspective is, but it is always from a hearing perspective and deafness can never be fully understood nor experienced unless by first hand. The researcher is on the side of Deaf in fighting against prejudices and oppression but still stands on both sides, as a hearing person that recognizes the Deaf community.

Ladd, Gulliver and Batterbury (2003) stress the importance that Deaf themselves are researchers on issues of deafness. But still it is considered that hearing researchers can also make contributions to Deaf research but they have to have the right skills and appropriate clarity about issues of deafness. The story of Deaf, the linguistic oppression of Deaf communities that deprived Deaf access to education has to be acknowledged in any research. A good research has to include the aspects of individuals of the community because without them the true information on Deaf lives cannot be gathered. The aim should be to change the mind-set of the hearing population, which undeniable has through history denied Deaf people their right of self-determination. According to Ladd et al., Deaf people themselves should be involved in all research on their community. Researches should be originating with Deaf people, coordinated by Deaf people and also disseminated by them for the empowerment of the Deaf community. The mind-set of hearing people has to change to make it possible for Deaf to be acknowledged and remove hidden barriers (Ladd, Gulliver & Batterbury 2003). They talk about “the Hearing role” and underline that:

[h]earing researchers need to question their role and potential contribution to the areas of Sign Language research and Deaf Studies. To some extent this state of on-going questioning is healthy and a process which helps guard against the assumption that accepted ways are always right (18).

They emphasize that hearing people should bear in mind the historical Oralism and its effect on the Deaf society. The legacy should be recognized and hearing researchers should make sure they have enough knowledge to

carry out a research on Deaf issues. They argue that there is in fact a place for hearing researchers but stress that Deaf should be involved: “This is not to say that hearing people should abdicate any involvement in Deaf research but that they need to recognise that their role, as allies and invited guests is one of support and not one of control” (Ladd, Batterbury & Gulliver, 2003:18).

Charlotte Aull Davies (1999) claims that it is unacceptable for the researcher not to attempt to learn the local language. But when time and money are restricting the study, a low level of the knowledge of the language is better than none. Learning a language while doing observation can help to interact with people and make it easier to access the culture and people beliefs (Crang & Cook, 2007; Davies, 1999).

In most qualitative research the researcher has to achieve closeness to his/her informants. They should be able to talk to their researcher openly about sensitive matters. In small sample study, more thought of impression is needed. Themes of the study, the biographies and social background call for very intensive contact with the participants and research with people who have a history of marginalization is possible only on the basis of trust. It is necessary to be aware that any disclosure of the information collected can be harmful for participants. The researcher has to make conscious decisions on what to report and what not, carefully consider the ethical dimensions of the impact of the information for the community and those who provide it (Davies, 1997; Dewalt, Dewalt, & Wayland, 1998).

3.9 Data analysis

The analysis of the data was undertaken using qualitative content analysis. The interviews were analysed based on grounded theory, following Mike A. Crang and Ian Cook (2007) with an open coding. Analysis as Crang and Cook describe is done by formally identifying set of themes from the data collected. Then related themes can be connected together to make sense of what was gathered. Then the data is further organized and the most important themes sorted out that can make up theoretical ideas. The process

involves re-reading the material, cutting and pasting together again. It is important to look back on the interviews and recapture the emotions that are involved with each utterance in order to interpret what is really being said. This might help the researcher to understand the data in more depth and there might be things that the researcher had not noticed while taking the interviews. In an open coded analysis – every line is analysed and the meaning of each sentence is studied. The intention of the segment should be taken into account – was it a joke, sarcasm or said in a defensive way. Was it something that all the interviewers said or repeated by a single interviewer? Did it especially occur in group conversations, was it an answer to a question or was it something the interviewer said without being asked directly? The interpretation of the researcher is also noted and written down. Similar themes or events are given similar labels that depend on the research in hand (Crang & Cook, 2007).

Martyn Atkinson and Paul Hammerlsey (2007) point out the importance of being aware of the influence of the researcher. The researcher will always have some influence on the production of the data and they stress that all the data must be interpreted in terms of the context it was produced. Since there is always some bias in ethnographical researches the aim is not to gather pure data. But the role of the researcher is to find the best way to interpret the data she has. Since it is inevitable that a researcher influences her informants it is important to try to understand how the presence of the researcher shapes the data. Hammersley and Atkinson also point out that there is no wrong or right choice of method in qualitative research, and it is important to note that a different researcher using a different mode may come to different conclusion than someone else.

In the current research the data gathered was in form of formal interviews and informal conversation and interactions. The interviews were read through and themes identified. The themes were categorized between male and female, Deaf and hearing to see what difference and patterns were found. Some themes occurred in all the interviews. Because of the knowledge of the researcher it was seen beforehand that themes such as sign

language, education and sign language interpreting service would be issues that would come up in interviews.

4 Results

The construction of the results builds up around the central theme question “what does empowerment mean for Deaf individuals and their hearing companions in Namibia?” The themes that were identified and created the theoretical foundation of the thesis were: power, sign language, education and sign language interpreting service. The research findings are divided into chapters following these themes. The first chapter includes the stories of Deaf interviewees growing up and learning sign language. Next there is a discussion on whether Deaf people have power over their lives and this is followed by a comparison with the status of Deaf people in other countries and people with other disabilities. Next chapter constitutes what the interviewees thought the concept empowerment means and what it entails for Deaf people in particular. This is based on what the interviewees thought creates the foundation of empowerment of Deaf. Here the question “what does empowerment of Deaf in Namibia consist of?” is discussed and analysed based on the views from the respondents. This discussion is presented in the following order: accessible education, access to healthcare and the society, Deaf teachers for Deaf children, early intervention and involvement of parents, employment of Deaf in Namibia, attitudes towards deafness / hearing attitudes and finally attitudes and self-empowerment. Then there is a chapter on the ICEIDA development project in Namibia. First the views of the interviewees on the project are outlined followed by the aspects of sustainability of the project. Next chapter is devoted on the situation of sign language interpreting service in Namibia today and this is followed by the last chapter which is on the thoughts of interviewees about their future.

4.1 The status of Deaf in Namibia

This chapter provides the perspective and experiences of the Deaf themselves on the situation of Deaf in Namibia. This was often the beginning of the interviews with a Deaf individual, usually following the question along the lines of: “can you please tell me little bit about yourself and your life growing up as Deaf person in Namibia?” In most cases, the interviewees were willing to share their story and began telling the researcher about themselves, their experience of growing up as a Deaf child in Namibia, going to school and learning sign language.

4.1.1 Seeing sign language for the first time

Many of the stories from the Deaf interviewees about growing up resembled each other and they have, to some extent, similar experiences from being a Deaf child in Namibia. Of the 23 Deaf individuals interviewed, only two of them, both women, had attended kindergarten when they were little girls. One of them was admitted when she was very young and she was the only one of the Deaf interviewees who had learnt sign language from such an early age. The second one was admitted to CLaSH at the age of six. The other Deaf individuals expressed stories about not going to school, staying at home and learning sign language late, (after they reached the age of 4-5 years and few not until after twenty years of age). Some of them had not been sent to school at all while others struggled in hearing schools trying understanding what the teachers said. Apparently, many of their parents had not been aware of schools for the Deaf or that their Deaf child could learn. It was not until later that a family member or a family friend had found out that there was a Deaf school in Namibia. This was when they had already been in hearing schools where their need of sign language was not recognized or not attended school at all, for some years. After failing to succeed in the “hearing” settings many of them were moved to a Deaf school between the ages from 6-14.

The fact that none of the 23 Deaf interviewees have Deaf parents or Deaf siblings means that they did not receive sign language or Deaf culture from

their families. In fact the first time they saw sign language (apart from the one girl who attended CLaSH before six years of age) was in school where most of them also met another Deaf person for the first time. At school age, they had never seen sign language before and most of them did not know any other Deaf people. One of them mentioned that before she saw another Deaf person, she believed she was the only one in the world that could not hear. Some recalled going to a Deaf school with their mom or dad where they saw strangers “moving their hands”, and did not understand a single word or what was going on. They had memories of being afraid and crying when their parents left them there. But they also remember the positive influence of getting to know the other Deaf children had on them and later on, the ease they felt when they were allowed to be exposed to and learn through a language they could access. One of the interviewees, a young Deaf girl expressed this experience as follows:

Didn't know about school until my auntie saw me at 6 years old, the friend of my auntie knew about one school for Deaf children where all the children were signing. I went there and I was so shy, didn't know anyone and wanted to go home. I cried and cried and looked for my dad and didn't understand sign language. But I started to learn when one teacher taught me and I became fluent in signing. And it was great ... and I told home that I learn ABC ... and went back to school, I was so happy.

Another informant, a young man explained how confusing it was to see sign language for the first time:

They were so fast with their hands in the air. I was so afraid, I think these are crazy people or what? I knew I was Deaf but I did not know sign language or anything about the Deaf, I did not know anything. I only knew the hearing culture. I was like ... my God! I was afraid ... until later, I was in boarding school, hostel, I was so afraid for the first time. They ask me the name and I

start to copy ... they say *no your* name. They asked me and I repeated the same thing but I started to understand that different people had different name signs. So I was just pointing at the village, you know I was pointing where I came from. As the time went on I began to understand and learn sign language ooh this is the language people use to communicate. I started to study ... It was so interesting now! I learnt more and more ...

It was clear from these stories that the Deaf interviewees, even from a young age, perceived language as very important for their daily life, education and development. After getting the opportunity to acquire a language, having access to sign language and other Deaf people, going to a Deaf school turned out to be life changing.

But despite these positive effects of going to a Deaf school, they argued that the level of education was not high. The benefits came mostly from interacting with other Deaf people because that was where they received their language, not from the teachers who were all hearing people. Despite being in Deaf school, the challenge of accessible education remained troublesome and even in there, the teachers appeared as having limited skills in sign language and did not realized how to teach Deaf children:

I remember at school it was not nice. The teachers did not know sign language. Just pointing at something and I did not understand anything. Teachers that want to teach Deaf must learn sign language, first thing. It is a very important thing...

Another Deaf girl points out that those teachers were accepted even though being unqualified in sign language and argues this has had consequences on her life:

The problem was that the teachers did not know how to sign and it was so difficult. The principal accepted those teachers despite they didn't know anything about sign language. After i failed grade 10 I went to the

village and stayed there for one year, I was not having anything to do, no job...

The educational system was one of the central subject throughout the interviews, both with the hearing and Deaf interviewees. The education of Deaf in Namibia today will be further discussed in a later chapter as it was seen as an important part of empowerment of Deaf. First, however it will be explored how the interviewees regarded the status of Deaf in terms of power and subsequently, their opinions on what empowerment entails for Deaf people in Namibia.

4.2 Power of Deaf

Power was a central topic of the interviews and evolved around whether the interviewees believed that Deaf Namibians had power over their lives and also in comparison with hearing people and with people with other disabilities. Power was commonly understood as having control over one's life and being able to perceive one's dreams which was further connected to being educated and get a good job on a high level. Power was also related to physical things, such as having enough money, a house or a car. One of the Deaf interviewees answered the question: "What does empowerment mean to Deaf?" in this way:

Same as having house, get married. Deaf fail grade 12 and so hearing are more empowered because they pass their exams. Deaf end up cleaning toilets and hearing have better jobs. Hearing complete schools and they are more privileged. For example, they have cars but Deaf are at home and only receiving the government money.

It was agreed by all interviewees, the hearing and Deaf, that hearing people have more power than Deaf in Namibia. Deaf were not considered to be on the same level as hearing with regards to decision making and there was a sense that many Deaf in Namibia feel powerless and are just sitting at home. Many mentioned that hearing people have better jobs and houses, they are better educated and have more opportunities than Deaf people.

Both hearing and Deaf interviewees argued that the lack of power was because of lack of knowledge and education. One young girl pointed out the frustration with the situation: “I am having this work that is not my dream. Same for others they are dreaming, that is why if it is possible I will go to school but the money behind it is the problem.”

4.2.1 Comparison to other African countries

The Deaf community in Namibia was often compared with Deaf communities in other countries and often Namibia was considered to be lacking behind. Some of the interviewees had travelled abroad and observed Deaf communities in different countries and pointed out that Deaf people are in high positions and even in some countries a Deaf person is a member of the parliament.

4.2.2 Deaf people and people with disability in Namibia

In order to understand the situation of Deaf people in Namibia, part of the questions were on the topic of people with disabilities in Namibia. Two women working at a training centre for people with disabilities in Namibia were interviewed and in their opinion there is lot of negative attitudes towards people with disabilities in Namibia. They agreed on the difficulties for people with disabilities to be employed. One of them argued the necessity that the system in Namibia, both in education and employment, to provide equal opportunities for all people with or without a disability. This includes alternative choices such as different trainings and vocational education and that the educational and employment sector should also make arrangements for people with learning disabilities in Namibia.

Some of the other interviewees also talked about the situation of people with disabilities and one argued that the support from the government was not enough:

Disabled people are suffering, only depending on the government support. It is small, not even enough to pay the rent, not even enough to pay for food. I think that

we must change our life! must be independent, not be depending on other people, no. We must make awareness for Deaf, to employ Deaf people like other. Even a disabled person can have skills, it is very important, they need to be employed.

An interesting topic on disability was in relations to the International Paralympics that were held at the time of the research. A Namibian girl, Johanna Benson won gold in women's 200m T37 running race on September 5th and by that she made history as the first Namibian to win a gold medal at either the Olympic or Paralympics Games. Benson was warmly welcomed home to Namibia after the games and received many sponsorship offers. At the occasion of welcoming her back to Namibia, Penandino Drusilla Kandhii, President of NPC Namibia said: "This is a wake-up call for all parents who are hiding their children with disabilities in our country. People are opening their eyes up to the Paralympics in Namibia. She has really put us on the map" (Official Website of the Paralympic Movement, 2012). This event awoke discussions about disability in sports in television and newspapers around Namibia and became a discussion issue in some of the interviews. One of the hearing interviewee pointed out that by winning a gold medal, Benson made headlines and attracted attention but in reality that there was not a great support to people with disabilities in Namibia:

I don't know even if they will continue this support or if it was only for that moment of shine, you know. And everybody says we support disabled but I can almost bet if you talk to the culture-centre, people that support these people, they had very little support before...they always say we should do more and disabled people should be looked upon but actually do the thing and give support, no, they are not receiving that at all...

Few of the Deaf interviewees also commented on this event. One of them pointed out that this created an opportunity to change views of people

towards people with disabilities, especially because Benson being a woman with a disability, was the first Olympic gold medal winner of Namibia:

It was as a surprise for hearing people, because others hearing have tried but no one make it. It was a good example to show that we, disabled people, we are not hiding behind, no! Many times we are just sitting at home, lock us in the house, now this lady won this it is a good example for the world. Because now see we can also do things, we are not just lazy people, no, we can fight! We can win, same for other different things, like them. Yes we can make it...

Few also used it as a rationale that people with other disabilities were better off since no Deaf people were succeeding in sports. There is no Deaf individual competing as an athlete in any kind of sport, and as one interviewer mentioned some of them have talents but they are not on a high level in competitions.

4.3 What does empowerment for Deaf mean?

All the interviewees agreed that the empowerment concept is important for Deaf people. In line with the theoretical discussions, being empowered was understood by the interviewees as being able to live without barriers and being able to pursue a life one desires. This chapter provides an outline on what interviewees thought could break these barriers and empower Deaf people in Namibia. To live without barriers was most commonly associated with access to interpreting services, education and employment. All the Deaf respondents answered the question „how can Deaf people in Namibia be empowered?“ by saying that access to sign language interpreters was essential for Deaf individuals to be able to be empowered: “Give power to a Deaf person you must give interpreter to a Deaf person”. A hearing person, when asked “what do you think empowerment of Deaf means?” answered that power is gained though knowledge that comes with education:

...empowerment means of course to give power ... and you have power if you have knowledge ... so, I think especially in this country empowerment is very closely connected to education and to training, and the more educated the Deaf people are, the more power they can rightfully claim.

4.3.1 “Education is a key to open all the doors“

Education was considered one of the most important parts of empowerment and several individuals stressed that Deaf should be treated equal to hearing people with regards to education, as one respondent stated “Education is supposed to be for all and also for the Deaf. Deaf should be empowered through education”. As already explained the Deaf interviewees struggled in the Deaf schools as children where the teachers had limited sign language skills. But the interviewees also talked about the limitations and barriers in education in Namibia of today and told stories of continuous fight to get interpreters in school. All of the Deaf interviewees experienced barriers in accessing education and many had tried to go to school without an interpreter and failed the exams:

After when I failed grade 12 I went home. I was feeling so bad. The problem was the interpreter. They said we are not having interpreters, don't have the money. So I decided to go on myself the first year. I tried, there was no interpreter. It was difficult, ohh but I tried and at the end of year I go for exam I fail again! I need an interpreter, which is the only thing that made me miss that year ... So I just left school and continued work.

One Deaf girl struggled to get an interpreter at the school she wanted to attend where she was the first Deaf person to be accepted but it turned out to be troublesome. She went from CCDS who sent her to NNAD and when they pointed back to CCDS she tried at Ministry of Education and at the National Disability Council but no one was willing to pay for an interpreter:

I went to talk about CCDS but no interpreter but they told me to go to NNAD are those that are responsible. I went to NNAD but they pointed back at CCDS but CCDS could not assist me. Then I tried at the special education but they could not help ... only interpreter in government schools. So I studied without interpreter and missed out a lot ... I decided that I could not carry on without interpreter but when I came back, I saw no interpreter, cannot do it again. I looked for interpreter. So at the National Disability Council I tried asked them and said I want interpreter, please help me, that I really needed an interpreter otherwise I would quit school.

Few of the other Deaf respondents also tried attending schools without an interpreter but explained to the researcher how hard that was, sitting in school trying to understand and failing the exams. Many were discouraged by this experience and gave up and tried to look for a job instead but expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with their situation. They could not finish school and get qualification but had bigger dreams than working in a low salary job which was the only thing they could get after struggling and falling out of school. It was commonly perceived in the interviews that the even today the educational system does not cater for the Deaf learners. This was very disempowering experience for many, as expressed by this respondent:

I was not happy when I was looking at these points.
Ohh ... I didn't accept that I was having that. I believe in myself, I knew I can make it but when the results came out I didn't. I was crying inside, paining inside...

Only one Deaf Namibian has accomplished to go to University and at the date of the research, no one else has passed grade 12. It follows that none of the Deaf interviewees in this research had accomplished to finish grade 12. It was argued that Deaf people do not have access to education and therefore are not able to get good jobs and continue to be on the margins of society. It was furthermore argued that Deaf people are not confident enough to fight

for their rights. This was also linked to education, they are not educated about their rights and some are illiterate and since they are not aware of their rights they remain powerless as one hearing interviewee pointed out:

They are not confident enough to stand out for their rights, I think, and I think this whole thing with education. If they were more educated if they were more literate they would feel more confident to stand up for their right...

As a consequence, all of the interviewees stressed the need of sign language interpreters, many repeatedly throughout an interview, the Deaf ones in particular. It was an emotional matter to Deaf people who experienced this barrier as a serious discrimination. The access of sign language interpreters was mostly connected to access of education which was seen as a central matter for improving the lives of Deaf individuals.

4.3.2 Access to healthcare and to the society

The schools and hospitals were considered the most important places to have an interpreting service available. Many Deaf talked about the situation in hospitals and complained about not understanding the healthcare providers. The communication between a Deaf patient and a hearing doctor was not seen as effective because the doctors did not know how to communicate with them. Sometimes patients would even receive wrong medicine due to the communication barrier and misunderstanding.

Apart from these two places, in education and in health care, it was also considered important to have interpreting service generally available in all places that communication takes place. It was pointed out by the respondents that having access to interpreting service is essential for full participation of a Deaf person in a society. This includes, for example, when a Deaf person goes to meetings, in the court, in communication with the police, at family gatherings and workplaces, in banks and so on. It was discussed that it would be better if people in official jobs were aware of Deaf people and had some basic knowledge in sign language. The sign language interpreting service of the television news was seen as a positive

thing and some claimed this was beneficial to them but many were unhappy about the quality of the service and said they did not understand the interpreters clearly and that not all the news were interpreted all the time.

4.3.3 Deaf teachers for Deaf children

Many of the Deaf interviewees stressed the importance of providing Deaf teachers for Deaf learners. They argued that with a Deaf teacher the children would receive the Deaf culture and being provided with a language role model and a Deaf person to look up to in other aspects. One Deaf interviewee pointed out the importance of transmitting Deaf culture to the next generation:

if you are a Deaf person teaching Deaf kids, the environment itself will be different. In grade 1 and 2 are important times for the kids, because the basic education, at the lower level. Because then they will learn their culture. Maybe at older they can have hearing teacher but at lower level they need Deaf teacher. That will make communication better and better understanding than being with hearing teacher. I think it is also very important to form the grammar at grade 1-4 for the kids to get the grammar straight from the teacher.

The lack of Deaf teachers was stressed by another Deaf interviewee:

The problem is the teachers many are hearing and there is no Deaf teacher – only one, two or three. People are having knowledge but there are only hearing teachers but if you put Deaf teachers I think it will encourage and motivate or empower the Deaf people rather than hearing people teach them...

It was stressed in a few interviews that the hearing teachers should at least be required to be fluent in sign language.

4.3.4 Early intervention and involvement of parents

Another issue connected to education was early intervention and involvement of the parents of Deaf children. The importance of early intervention is recognized in the *National Disability Council Act* 2004. Despite this there is no such service for Deaf. Since there is no early identification and no new-born universal screening program of Deaf children in Namibia many children are diagnosed late. Both a hearing and a Deaf interviewee stressed the need to empower parents to be aware of their children and help them to know what to do when they discover their child does not hear. According to the findings, early intervention is not available for parents of Deaf in Namibia. In Namibia, children who are Deaf are not “discovered” until they come to school already above five years old. Some come to CLaSH but only a very small proportion of the whole Deaf population. An interviewee at CLaSH said the unit emphasizes on starting early: “because it is my strongest belief all this empowerment of Deaf must start as early as possible ... a hearing child gets stimulation and input, the Deaf child deserves the same...”

One hearing interviewee explained that parents are not involved in their Deaf child development and education. She argued that the foundation of Deaf empowerment should start there with teaching parents sign language and counsel them to understand that Deaf can learn. The schools need to work more with the parents and give them training in sign language. She felt that everyone around the child should be fluent in sign language: “once the child is identified as Deaf his parents should be able to communicate, the schools should be able to communicate early so he can also learn sign language and become fluent” Sign language was seen as an important foundation for other education such as English. Some parents live far away and transportation to access sign language classes remains a challenge for them. Most of the parents are poor and may not be motivated to learn sign language because of their circumstances and sign language might not be very accessible, as one hearing interviewee pointed out:

Most of the parents are very poor, so they struggle to survive themselves. So learning sign language is

definitely not a... priority. And secondly, also they need to be told that your child can learn equally than the hearing child.

Child easily grows up to 3 years old without being diagnosed as deaf even up to 6 – 12 years old. It was further argued that even the parent may know their child is deaf but does not know what to do with that or where to turn to for assistance. They might not be aware that their child can learn and let it stay at home and as one interviewee said: “watch the goats”. Some Namibians also still believe that the deafness is a curse from God or ancestors. A hearing interviewee at the University pointed out that the fact that Deaf children’s needs are not being attended to is not empowerment of Deaf but rather the parents:

...this is not empowerment of the Deaf, this is empowerment of the parents and the communities ... but again this kind of empowerment has to do with education. Education, this people need to know, need to understand being Deaf is not a curse from God, and it is not also a funny sign from ancestors.

It was stressed that education was also the key to address this problem. A hearing interviewee pointed out that the parents are still not much involved in the education of their deaf child and they are blamed for that. But she argued that the parents are not given support from the government and that is a big problem:

...we don’t actually also support the parents, then we always expect parents to support us, but we also don’t give support to the parents. So it is a whole circle that needs to change, so maybe if we give a little support to parents, if we identify Deaf children, give parents support and guide them as to what they need to do for the Deaf and understand their child better, then they maybe be more involved in the education of the Deaf. It is a whole circle that we need to change...

This issue was also recognized by one Deaf grown up woman who expressed her concerns on the matter. She emphasized that most Deaf children are exposed to sign language too late to learn a language because the mothers do not know sign language and do not where to turn to. She suggested that there should be a project for the mothers of Deaf children where they could meet each other and be taught sign language. That would make Deaf children more competent to go to school having sign language as medium of communication and playing:

Maybe we should have a project for mothers of Deaf children. Mothers of Deaf children, to put them together and teach them sign language, when they are growing they move to Deaf school it will be nice for them to play and communicate in this language. That would make it easy and I think that is how we would develop.

4.3.5 Employment of Deaf

Employment was another highly important issue in the interviews. This issue was also an emotional matter for the Deaf interviewee and was a matter of equality:

We must also be part of the economy, contribute to the economy because now we are left behind, don't get opportunity in life if it is because of our deafness or what. It is not us who chose to be Deaf it is God that made us like this.

Of the 23 Deaf interviewed, 17 had jobs, four were unemployed, and two were students (one currently in school, one attempting to be accepted in a school). Of the Deaf who had jobs there were assistants of teachers, cleaners, an officer, teachers of Deaf adults and one had his own business. Six of them claimed they were happy about their occupation and thereof few of them satisfied about their working environment. The other eleven were dissatisfied with their job for example with the salary and lack of

communication at the workplace. They also wanted more in their lives than to work at low level as cleaners or at other low level jobs. Two of the unemployed Deaf had recently lost their jobs. According to them they lost it because of communication barriers:

I lost my job due to the communication barrier and there were no interpreter to help me, to explain what happened to me, so that how can I...I end up losing my job. So now I am still fighting I am looking for another job.

As already explained, unemployment rate is very high in Namibia especially among those who are uneducated and there is a lot of inequality in the society. The group of Deaf individuals is therefore in special danger of being unemployed because their access to education is limited. Because of this, many of the Deaf interviewees wanted to go back to school but did not see a way to accomplish that because of the lack of interpreting services. They could not afford to pay for the interpreters themselves. Another issue was the attitudes from hearing people and one interviewee argued that Deaf are less likely to be employed because of negative attitudes of employers.

4.3.6 Attitudes towards deafness / Hearing attitudes

It is not about colours, not about body, not about disability. If hearing people think Deaf people are bad, in the future hearing people will be ashamed of themselves. We must come together and include ourselves with hearing people. We must cooperate, for all of us to develop and be equal.

The attitudes from hearing people were a common topic in the interviews. Many expressed negative attitudes from hearing persons towards Deaf people and sign language. Some of the Deaf interviewees felt that they were perceived as stupid and helpless persons and that hearing sometimes misused this. Some examples were of Deaf being vulnerable because of

these attitudes. One Deaf interviewee mentioned an incident at his workplace when a hearing person blamed him for something he had not done. Many Deaf interviewees argued that hearing people did not know how to communicate with them although some were interested in learning sign language and had positive attitudes. One stressed that if hearing people would know sign language they would realize that Deaf people are equal to hearing people. He stressed that hearing people could play a part in empowering Deaf:

The hearing look at us and they think we are stupid, if hearing have sign language skills they know now that he is having skills, know how to communicate with Deaf people. And they can empower Deaf people for them to develop. Maybe the hearing have interest in empower the Deaf people.

4.3.7 Attitudes and self-empowerment

An interviewee, a hearing woman herself, discussed how hearing people, by showing too much sympathy and pity towards Deaf and people with disabilities, play their part in creating a disability. She argued that hearing people can create a situation where Deaf and people with disabilities lose their power and become dependent on others to take care of them. She realized that she as a hearing (able-bodied) person had power in creating oppression of Deaf. She argued that feeling sorry for someone with a disability only puts that individual at a disadvantage. Instead of sympathizing and pity the Deaf people they should be provided with an access to education and be taught about their rights. If Deaf people knew their rights and were literate, they could stand up for themselves. But she also stressed that creating an accessible environment is not enough because empowerment has also to come from within individuals themselves. Another hearing interviewee agreed with this view, that Deaf people had responsibility for their own empowerment:

I think it is not good enough to just to talk about empowerment and give people money or talk about

empowerment and give people jobs, they need to earn that power that they get and if I say they need to earn it I mean they need earn it by working hard, learning hard, living up to expectations, putting themselves also on the same level...

The responsibility of Deaf themselves in empowerment was also mentioned by some Deaf interviewees. Those were Deaf individuals who understood that it is the mindset of Deaf individuals themselves that up to a certain extent is what makes them powerless. One Deaf interviewer pointed out that Deaf tend to feel inferior towards hearing people:

...we are afraid looking at the hearing person, they can do this and that. We are just quiet. Deaf must fight, many times we are afraid to go out there, face this people, there are challenges. They are afraid of hearing people look at us, the way we are, we cannot hear. There is not a Deaf person that is a role model. In Namibia there is not even a person, maybe international but in Namibia we don't have it.

Another interviewee, a Deaf woman, pointed out that some Deaf people have a negative attitude towards themselves as Deaf persons and against other Deaf people. She argued that some Deaf believe that hearing people know better and choose to follow what a hearing person says rather than the Deaf person says: "you know what, now if a hearing person says something Deaf people follow that, but if a Deaf person say something, it is so hard for them to accept it, so hard".

Many of the interviewees, both Deaf and hearing, argued that the community of Deaf in Namibia is not strong. Some of the Deaf interviewees felt they were standing alone trying to fight for their rights. But it was agreed that alone they would not accomplish much and that it is necessary to stand as a group together. Recognizing rights of minorities needs to be the role of the civil society. One Deaf interviewee argued: "I want people who are signing showing strong and showing power. But our people are signing

like they are afraid or shy. They must have self-confidence and they lack self-confidence so much”.

As is clear from this discussion the interviewees had strong opinions about the situation of the Deaf in Namibia and most of them had good ideas about what they perceived as important for Deaf people’s empowerment. It was agreed on, by all the interviewees, both the Deaf and the hearing ones, that access to education and employment through the usage of sign language interpreters is essential for the empowerment of this group. This was considered a matter of equality to have access to interpreting service and the Deaf ones in particular saw this as way to be equal to hearing people. This was seen as a communication barrier that created a barrier to all ways of empowerment. But there were also other important aspects, such as changing attitudes, the importance of early intervention and having role models and about the importance of self-empowerment.

A group of the interviewees participated in the ICEIDA project. These individuals had strong belief that a development such as that one is effective in terms of empowering Deaf people. Next chapter discusses the findings on the ICEIDA project, how participants felt they benefited and on its long term effects.

4.4 The ICEIDA project

Twelve of the Deaf interviewees had participated in the ICEIDA project and four of the hearing interviewees had been involved. For this group, some additional questions on that project were added. They were asked how they felt about it, did they benefit from it and what did it change for them.

All the interviewees agreed that the ICEIDA project had benefitted them in a positive way. They claimed that the project had helped them and widened their perspective. Many of the Deaf interviewees explained how happy they were to be able to go to school and understand what the teachers were saying, since ICEIDA funded their school fees and the interpretation. The hearing interviewees agreed that the ICEIDA project set things in motion. The person in the Ministry of Education stressed that the ICEIDA

project had made big impact on service for Deaf people. In her opinion the biggest improvement was the establishing of sign language interpreting service. Another interviewee pointed out that Deaf education had not developed a lot before 2006 and that the project had revived interest for the issue. The person in the Ministry said that Deaf are becoming literate and the importance of Deaf adult education is now understood. Before, Deaf could only hope to finish grade ten and then look for jobs. Now they can study and also learn other skills, for examples in vocational centres because there are interpreters: “That is the biggest... a gift that ICEIDA could give” The Deaf who participated in the research all expressed their happiness of being able to study without struggling with communication barriers: “ICEIDA bought our uniform, school fees everything ...I was so happy. It was very easy, could study, communicating. I was like oh thank God. I was so happy, this was a gift from God... you know”.

4.4.1 Inclusive education

In 2007, as part of the support from ICEIDA, Deaf students attended mainstream school, senior secondary, with an interpreter for the first time. The hope was to give Deaf young learners opportunities to go to university and get chance to get a higher employment later. It was hoped that those individuals would act as role model for the Deaf community as a whole in Namibia (Bjarnason et al. 2012). Many said they were a bit scared in the beginning to work with hearing people and were not sure if they would be respected. They were worried about the communication or lack of it. But after they got to know the hearing participants the fear vanished. They were very happy to learn they could interact with hearing people on an equal level. Deaf felt the hearing participants were willing to find a way to communicate even if they did not know much sign language:

The first time I was with hearing people. ... I didn't like it, cause I was used to our school, they are all Deaf. Now I was thinking that the communication would be so difficult. First time I didn't manage, because I wanted to use my hands...but now at the end I saw that

the hearing people they are signing! I feel so happy and thankful. Some in class were signing and we were sharing our stories. It was so nice.

Others had similar things to say, they were afraid at the beginning of the ICEIDA project to be together with hearing people. But when they realized that they could follow up with the interpreter and interact with hearing fellow students who were willing to learn sign language they thought these settings were good. They described the experience as a pleasant surprise and had a realization that hearing people were interested in sign language and respected them and they could make friends with them. This made them grow in their confidence of being on an equal basis with hearing people. One expressed his happiness with the cooperation with the interpreters, teachers and Deaf learners working together. One participant in the ICEIDA project pointed out that Júlía G. Hreinsdóttir, who is a Deaf Icelandic teacher and was a teacher in the project, was an important role model for the Deaf in Namibia since they had not seen a Deaf person like her that was educated:

It was so important to see a Deaf person, she was like a role model to us – Julia [G. Hreinsd.] So interested, if you are a Deaf person meet another person you feel like you want to be like that person. It is a Deaf person like me but look the way they are!

It became throughout clear that having a role model that is Deaf influences other Deaf people in different way than hearing role models. It was clear that the fact that a person, like Julia, who is Deaf and is successful in life, for example had an education or an employment on a high level is influential in a positive way. It was also discussed by other participants that having a Deaf teacher was by itself empowering. This stresses the importance of having Deaf people involved in development project that aim towards Deaf minorities.

4.4.2 Sustainability of the ICEIDA project

The interviewees all agreed that the ICEIDA project had positive effects on the Deaf society in Namibia. Many pointed out that the situation before had been very bad with very little/limited service for Deaf people. It was pointed out that there had been almost no interpreters and that CCDS was a good establishment. One interviewee argued that the situation of Deaf in Namibia had improved and that was in part because of the ICEIDA project:

I think the situation has improved a lot a lot, not only because we have more schools, more units, more specialized education facilities. I think Deaf people are somehow more visible. And with the ICEIDA, people somehow get more aware about it...I think that a lot has changed for the better, even the CCDS has been established, you know, it's a good development.

But it was also argued that the current situation was not good enough. Some pointed out that all the people in powerful positions are hearing and they argued that their point of view was not listened to. Some said that it was not enough understanding the need for sign language in schools and pointed out that the teachers who have limited education in sign language are chosen over the ones who are fluent. This is based on the fact that a University degree is required. Some argued that the Deaf should be given exemption of having a degree and it is very important for the future of Deaf children that they get a real sign language in the schools and not less importantly are having a Deaf role model.

As the findings of the evaluation of the project (Ellis, 2010) part from the lack of the government paying for the interpreting service, the sustainability of the project seemed to be real. An interviewee at the University believed that more Deaf children are sent to school today compared to ten years before. But what makes this difficult to prove is the lack of reliable statistics about the number of Deaf children in Namibia as pointed out earlier. There was also a sense among few of the interviewees, including the one at the Ministry of Education that the negative attitudes and old beliefs were

diminishing and they thanked the project for this awakening on issues on deafness in Namibia. Namibian Sign language was also considered to be more visible and respected than before. Furthermore as some of the interviewees with the SignWiki project this should be able to continue.

4.5 Sign language interpreting service

As already pointed out few times, sign language interpreting service was seen as one of the most important issue so this was also the topic of sustainability of the ICEIDA project. Many of the Deaf interviewees who participated in the project said they wanted the ICEIDA project to continue and that they felt the Ministry and government were not taking responsibility to take over the ICEIDA project. Some said that things are going back to the way they were before the ICEIDA project started, since now there was no money for interpreting service anymore. These were especially Deaf that claimed the situation was going back to the way it was before. A Deaf individual pointed out that there were only hearing individuals in powerful position that concern Deaf in Namibia:

At the time when they got support from Iceland they were so happy, they were given interpreters, they were so happy. Now this time there are no interpreters in school and they must go and struggle on their own. ICEIDA was supporting Deaf people the government does not know this. You were with an interpreter, you were so happy happy, you feel like you make it.

The government was supposed to continue catering for the interpreting services and take over the payments after ICEIDA withdrew from Namibia. This was accomplished and the government did reach an agreement to provide the interpreters salary. But as of today, according to findings of the research, the central government no longer covers the salaries for interpreter service and the regional governments are supposed to take over. According to the interviewee at the Ministry of Education, the sign language interpreters that were trained by the ICEIDA project are not counted as

qualified, due to their lack of formal education at university level. Today, sign language interpreters are supposed to receive a University Education. According to her, they also have not completed grade 12 and do not have the skills to understand the content of the subjects they are interpreting:

No, they also didn't pass grade 12. They also need to do grade 12 and further their studies. So everywhere there is a gap. So with these new teachers/interpreters we hope this at least will be soft. So now we have these teachers/interpreters, they can act as teachers, and if there is a Deaf child, they can be interpreters as well.

Another problem, she pointed out, is that since now there are already teachers at these schools it is not easy to appoint the new teachers/interpreters. But those already employed teachers do not have skills in sign language. These are obstacles in education of Deaf children: the teachers currently teaching do not have sign language skills but it is impossible to hire new teachers/interpreters. But she stressed that they have a clear vision of what they wanted, that is employing qualified teachers for Deaf (that are teachers/interpreters or teachers who know sign language). She further pointed out that the complications of requiring qualification also apply for teachers of sign language students. Therefore there is not a fluent signer that can teach at University level. Deaf have been appointed as teachers' assistants but without having the qualification to work as such. Because of their lack of education, the Ministry of Education has to justify why they are needed but as the interviewee said, the sign language skill was the prerequisite why they were appointed as sign language teachers.

At the time of the research there was a group of students in UNAM (University of Namibia) that had graduated as qualified teachers and sign language interpreters. But according to the interviewee at Ministry of Education, there are not enough Deaf children in schools for those graduated teachers/interpreters to be working as interpreters full time. That was the reason she gave for them to be appointed as teachers rather than interpreters. It should be pointed out that this conclusion is opposite to what Deaf respondents argued. As earlier stated, Deaf interviewees on the

contrary, stressed the severe lack of teacher with sign language skills and the many Deaf children who are not attending schools:

the degree is not important if you don't know sign language. First you must know sign language. Now they are accepting people from university with a degree but do not know sign language. The sign language is number one the most important rather some degree.

Some expressed hopelessness and felt they could not do anything, rather it was someone else's responsibility, the CCDS and government should do something. But when they were asked about the role of the community to fight for themselves, they agreed that Deaf could fight if they stand together. Others were more optimistic and thought the situation of Deaf in Namibia would improve in the future.

4.6 The future

Some of the interviewees were young Deaf people. They were dissatisfied with their situation, wanted to go to school, study and get their dream job. Despite the barriers they experienced in accessing education they were still positive about their future. One pointed out the importance to belief in themselves:

Sometimes we Deaf want to go to University, they have this negative thought: "we will not make it we will not make it", that it is impossible, but you will, you will, if you want to, you will. It is only that they have wrong belief. They must be taught that we can do it like hearing people.

The Deaf interviewees believed they could be successful and get employment of their choice. The wish included: to work in an airplane, be a business person, dancer, to be a medical doctor and a teacher. They argued Deaf people can do anything, be lawyers, doctors, teachers, members of parliament, athletics and so on. Few mentioned they wanted to be famous mostly for the purpose motivating and empowering other Deaf Namibians.

The issue of having Deaf role models was also seen as a reason to be a successful person, to motivate other Deaf people in Namibia:

I think I must also contribute. Must also be professional go to UNAM, university, Deaf must study, must be lawyers, you see, different things, different level, the high level, that is what I want to see. For me I need to encourage them, I need to motivate the Deaf people...

One of the young Deaf interviewee expressed his dream of becoming a teacher and encourage Deaf children. He was sure that that would be empowering for others, to see him as a powerful Deaf person: “to empower the Deaf. Empower my community... will feel happy, cause you give back to the community. I must give back to the community anything I get. When you look at our people, they need more support, motivation”

Another Deaf expressed similar views:

My future,... I want to be a famous Deaf person, I want to make the Deaf to be equal like the hearing, need to Deaf project to develop Deaf people for the future. If I become old I must know that I was also contributing to them. I was one to contribute to them that they become something in future. I don't want to have just only one Deaf in Africa, we have lot of Deaf people and they must also do like hearing people must be equality treated.

One girl wanted to establish her own organization to influence and power Deaf people in Namibia:

My dream is to have my own organization where I will empower the Deaf in Namibia. All people have dreams and we need encouragement and education and to know life ... and know sometimes Deaf are stuck and may have interest in doing something and becoming something in life but don't know how to get help.

As is clear from these examples many of the Deaf interviewees were very hopeful and had positive attitudes towards their future. It is interesting to note that the Deaf community seemed to matter a great deal in their self-image and their thoughts about the future. The ones who had participated in the ICEIDA project were more open towards the possibilities of the future. Many of the Deaf interviewees expressed their wish to visit other countries, had curiosity of how things are in different countries concerning Deaf matters. Many who participated in the ICEIDA project expressed their wish for it to continue. But even though things were not as good as could be hoped they all agreed that the ICEIDA had helped them on their ways to reach their goals. They, as the example show, were also certain their actions would benefit others and stressed their part as empowering the Deaf community in Namibia.

5 Discussion

Interestingly, almost all of the interviewees had opinions on what empowerment is and agreed on the necessity to empower Deaf individuals in Namibia. Empowerment was seen as a process of removing barriers and in this case it involved having sign language interpreting service available and providing access to education and employment. All of them mentioned the importance of education as an empowering force both for the future of Deaf individuals and to change negative attitudes of the society.

In line with the theories of Sen (1999) and about the value of Deaf culture (Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1999; Jankowski, 1997, Breivik 2005), the conclusion of this thesis supports that Deaf people wish foremost to live a “barrier-free” life but not to “fix their disability” and become hearing persons. The Deaf interviewees expressed wishes to live in a society where they are considered equal to other people, where there is access to the society, most importantly to education and employment. This would mean equal opportunities for Deaf people to pursue their dream in life as hearing Namibians. None of the Deaf interviewees were satisfied with receiving the disability benefits as a way of life as this did not prevent them from experiencing limited access to opportunities to lead their own life, choose an employment and earn their own living. None of the interviewees were happy about being unemployed (or ill paid). This corresponds to the theories of Sen (1999), as discussed earlier, who argued that it is not enough to give government support in form of financial payment to solve the problem of unemployment, people are still deprived of important factors in achieving fulfilling lives. Many of the Deaf interviewees expressed deep dissatisfaction with “sitting at home and do nothing”.

Despite the challenges in education for Deaf in Namibia and accessing service it is interesting to look at what the Deaf interviewees had to say about being a Deaf person and their identity. One Deaf girl pointed out that she was “happy being a Deaf person” and as much as the Deaf interviewees

complained about the situation in their country none of them mentioned they wished to restore their hearing. It is important to keep in mind though, that they were not directly asked that question. But none of them talked about hearing aids or cochlear implants and they all appeared to have accepted their status as a Deaf person. The value of the Deaf community seemed to be understood even if they did not necessarily have deep knowledge of theories on deafness. This is also based on the social view within disability studies, namely the idea that disability is created by barriers in accessing the society. Even though the community of Deaf in Namibia is not very strong the Deaf interviewees had a strong sense of belonging to a community. This was for example clear in future plans of some young Deaf interviewees, they knew their actions affect other Deaf Namibians and their plans often included wishes to influence other Deaf people. Some had done something they were proud of and were already acting as role models. This included being the first Deaf to do something or succeeding over hearing people, for example the Deaf woman who expressed her pride being a Deaf person and still passing exams that her hearing fellow students failed. As Breivik (2005) argues, the Deaf are both vulnerable and strong because they belong to a community and as Ladd (2003) has pointed out, Deaf culture carries value and forms a sense of identity.

As argued, the removal of barriers for access in society were seen as necessary for empowerment but it was also argued by both hearing interviewees and Deaf that self-empowerment is not less important. This supports the ideas expressed by Tandon (1995), Jankowski (1997) and Freire (1996) that individuals have to claim their own power and that without it there will not be any progress. As discussed in the theoretical framework, Deaf have experienced paternalism from hearing people (Jankowski, 1997; Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1999; Senghas & Monaghan 2002) so it can be argued that self-empowerment is even more important for Deaf people. Some of the interviewees expressed they had experienced paternalism from their hearing fellow Namibians. One young man explained how a hearing person in a powerful position tried to choose what was best for him and how he had to fight for his choice to be respected. It was

pointed out by another Deaf interviewer that all the people who are located in high position within the sector around deafness are hearing people. Deaf people were considered to have less power than the hearing ones, including taking decisions concerning their own life. It corresponds to what Kreps (2000) pointed out, that it is not enough to place a person in a certain setting. If that person is not given any authority she or he does not have any real power. Some of the Deaf interviewed argued that the hearing people in high positions did not have enough sign language skills or knowledge on Deaf issues and did not represent Deaf in Namibia.

It can be argued that most of the topics in the interviews revolved around sign language as the most important aspect of being Deaf and the importance of sign language was strongly emphasized among the Deaf interviewees. As Jankowski (1997) pointed out, communication is a central issue of the Deaf movement and this was quite clear in the interviews. As is stated by Jankowski (1997) and Ladd (2003), sign language is a symbol of the fight of the Deaf for their unity and revolves around the concept of equality. As became clear from the stories, the Deaf interviewees struggled in hearing schools as children. They were left out as one who only copied what he saw the others students doing but did not learn to write or read as them. It was not until these Deaf individuals entered Deaf schools and learnt sign language that they started to learn other things, mathematics, reading and writing. According to them, even as of today, the teachers at schools, both at the mainstream schools and special schools for Deaf do not have a full understanding of the situation of the Deaf child. Many of the Deaf interviewees described the continuing struggle within the educational system in Namibia presently. Many of the Deaf interviewees had failed to get enough points to pass on to next year and many of them had failed repeatedly, even two to three times.

Role models were seen as an important for empowering Deaf in Namibia. As Adoyo (2008) pointed out, the social connection to other Deaf people is important for development of the child. An interesting example of this is that one of the Deaf interviewees had believed as a child that she was the only one in the world who could not hear before she saw another Deaf

person. This stresses the fact that Deaf children need to have grown up Deaf role models. Same goes for the others; they did not know what to think when they saw Deaf people speaking sign language for the first time. Therefore many stressed, in line with Jankowski's (1997) argument, the importance of having Deaf in visible positions and as teachers providing role models for children. Furthermore, Deaf role models were also an issue that came up several times throughout the interviews as an important factor to empower the Deaf community in Namibia as a whole. This was for example linked to the victory of Benson at the Olympics. Furthermore, some young Deaf interviewees wanted to become famous to show other Deaf that Deaf people can be at the same level as hearing people.

Another important issue was early intervention and involvement of the parents. It is clear that at the time when the Deaf interviewees were growing up there was a lack of information for parents of Deaf children. But unfortunately, according to an interviewer currently working at CLaSH, the same problem is prevailing today as CLaSH can only serve a small proportion of Deaf children living in Namibia. Parents or caregivers are not aware of services available for Deaf children in Namibia. It was recognized by a few of the interviewees that it is important to learn language from an early age.

While the situation of Deaf people in Namibia seems quite difficult, many of the interviewees discussed their hopes of the future and believed the situation would improve. Most of the interviewees were positive for the future of Deaf people in Namibia and believed that opportunities would come with more education. The participants in the ICEIDA project all stressed their happiness and success as having been part of the project. The Deaf stressed the relief of having accessible education through an interpreter and the hearing interviewees stressed that the project had really made some effort and set things in motion. It was in fact empowering for both the Deaf people who participated and for the sector in deafness as whole. Júlía Hreinsdóttir who worked as a consultant in the ICEIDA project, was an important role model for Deaf people. The Deaf in Namibia had not believed that a white person could be Deaf person or have a higher level of

education. The Deaf individuals all stressed their gratitude and many concluded “if it had not been for that project, I would not be here today” meaning they were in better position today than before. Many argued they had developed self- confidence and were fighting for their education because they thought: “I know I can make it.” Few of them were involved with teaching Deaf adults and realized they could influence other people and were aware that there are many Deaf people who are uneducated in need of support.

5.1 Implications and suggestion

The group of participants in this thesis represent Deaf people in Namibia up to a certain level but it has to be mentioned that they also represent the group of the Deaf population that has gone further than many of their Deaf companions. It was widely discussed among the interviewees that many other Deaf people are worse off, illiterate, unemployed and simply “sitting at home, doing nothing”. All of the Deaf individuals who were interviewed had some education, they were literate and many of them had jobs or had been employed at some time. It can be argued that there are Deaf people in Namibia who have not been educated, are illiterate and are worse off than this group of individuals. The limitations of time as well as the distance from the researcher to the Deaf people living in rural areas, were the reasons these individuals were not included. It should be kept in mind that it is estimated that many Deaf children are out of school in Namibia.

It has been demonstrated through the theories and supported by the evidence of the research that Deaf teachers, respect of sign language and Deaf culture as well as Deaf role models are factors that create empowerment of Deaf people. But the current situation does not enable the Deaf to have full access to education. The reason is, as the interviewees argued themselves, the lack of sign language speaking teachers and interpreters or in other words the apparent lack of will from the government to provide teachers and pay the salaries for interpreters. The ICEIDA project had positive effects and created opportunities for Deaf people who

otherwise would not have gone that far in pursuing education. The settings, the education and the whole implementation were considered successful by the interviewees. An agreement was established with the government and it was carried on for some time but the regional offices were supposed to take over the interpreting service which has not been as successful. As of today the government is not providing enough support to pay for the interpreters. It is clear that in order to empower Deaf people of Namibia the educational system and access to employment opportunities has to be more flexible towards people with disabilities.

The lack of flexibility in the strict administrative system of Namibia creates a vicious circle. There is a lack of sign language interpreters which makes it troublesome for Deaf to get access to education. The consequences are that Deaf people are not achieving education at higher level than 10 and cannot pursue a degree. The same is true for education of Deaf children; the teachers have limited skills in sign language which affects Deaf education. This also means that the Deaf children do not have a Deaf role model who can transmit sign language as a native speaker and there is a danger that the Deaf culture will not be strong within the walls of school. There is also a lack of fluent sign language speaking teachers at the University to teach students who want to learn sign language since there are no Deaf native teachers (only in the form of teachers' assistance, with limited power). This leaves Deaf in Namibia with a low level of quality of education and the circle of barriers continues like that. Furthermore, the requirement to reach certain points to pass on into the next year is making barriers for Deaf students that arguably fail because of the low quality Deaf education. Not to mention that the system is too strict as it does not allow for special arrangements for Deaf to take oral exams. This inequality creates discouragement and frustration. When a person fails grades repeatedly, one loses hope. There are some other ways, vocational trainings but the trouble remains the same, there are not enough sign language interpreters.

Since there are many obstacles to access education and gain employment, it would seem necessary that exceptions should be created. This applies both for the oral exams for Deaf students and appointing Deaf people as sign

language teachers of Deaf people, despite not having University qualification. Because as of today, the teachers at schools are not fluent in sign language, the interpreters are scarce and Deaf keep being denied access to education. Deaf are struggling to be allowed to enter schools, upgrade their points and be allowed into University. Another important aspect that has been made clear throughout this thesis is that Deaf role models are important for individuals to see that a Deaf person can accomplish equally to hearing people. This makes it even more important to allow for exemptions for Deaf so that the circle of barriers can be broken. If Deaf are provided interpreters and allowed to enter schools, get support to pass exams and be allowed to have Deaf teachers, they can act as role models for the Deaf community in whole and the circle of empowerment can begin.

There was some experience of inclusive education for Deaf as a part of the ICEIDA project. The Deaf who participated in that expressed their happiness of realizing they could interact and be on an equal level with hearing people. This was in fact an empowering experience for them. As pointed out an inclusive education setting for Deaf children is a controversial matter and many Deaf have raised their concerns (Adoyo, 2008; Kotzé, 2012; Stinson & Antia, 1999). It is argued that the Deaf culture will get lost and that Deaf children will not develop a self-image and identify as a Deaf individual. As pointed out, this is why Deaf teachers are seen as important. But the conclusion of the thesis is that inclusive education can be empowering and be a positive experience for Deaf individuals. Together these two worlds can work effectively for the benefit of both groups. It must be stressed that access to education has to be provided either through an interpreter or where sign language is used by teachers. Whereas the school system is not fully capable of implementing an inclusive education that benefits all, there is still need for different options such as special schools, special units, or other arrangements so that education can benefit all children whatever their circumstances. But this gives the clue that inclusive education can be an empowering process when Deaf are included on an equal level with hearing people and their language and culture is respected. This provides an important lesson for future

researches on inclusive education and development for Deaf individuals. This is supporting the idea that empowerment can be a shared process (Kreisberg, 1992; Page & Czuba, 1999).

Another important aspect is that despite that the Deaf interviewees had of strong sense of belonging to a Deaf community, the Deaf community in Namibia, there is a lack of unity and striving to secure the rights of the Deaf. Some of the Deaf interviewees argued that the Deaf community is weak in Namibia and it became clear that the social community of Deaf needs strengthening. Some Deaf individuals complained about lack of service from institutions such as NNAD, CCDS and other organizations, but the Deaf community does not have an organized demonstration against what they find lacking. One respondent said it was hard to get Deaf together, said they were willing at the beginning but would soon stop showing up. This could indicate that many Deaf individuals lack self-empowerment and believe to some extent they should be taken care of. This is stressing that empowerment process has to involve both the breaking of barriers that hinder individuals or a group of people to live a prosperous life and to claim their human rights as well as strategies to encourage self-empowerment. One of the key conclusions is that education has self-empowering effects. Education has been mentioned as an important tool in empowerment both by academics and organisations such as the World Bank and by the interviewees in this research. Education about human rights should be part of development projects. If an individual or a group of people are not aware of their rights, for example the right to have accessible education they will remain powerless.

As Munoz-Baell and Ruiz (2000) argue, empowerment for Deaf should focus on removing communication barriers but also educate people as a way of self-empowerment, individuals have to feel the power within themselves. Empowerment should therefor always include aiming at increasing the self-esteem and acceptance of Deaf individuals. Negative attitudes and stigma towards Deaf people should also be changed by creating awareness among the hearing people about deafness. Munoz-Baell and Ruiz also point out the importance of working together with Deaf organizations and federations in

the country and also involve the families of Deaf children. As argued, these factors all need improving in Namibia. Parents are not involved, there is no newborn screening and they are not supported and there is lack of information. There is a conflict between organizations working for the Deaf and lack of close cooperation with Deaf people. It can be stressed this is in part because there is a lack of Deaf individuals to stand together and claim accountability from services. There are still very few Deaf people in high positions concerning Deaf issues in Namibia. As argued by Jankowski (1997) because Deaf people are experts in their own experience, Deaf individuals should be in positions of control in Deaf education and involved in decision making that affect the Deaf community.

Since human rights are increasingly becoming a tool in the fight of minorities for their rights it can be emphasized that the Ministry of Education in Namibia has responsibilities to make sure children and adults with disabilities receive education. As Namibia has ratified many conventions, including the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, where it is declared that access to education is a human right and has stated that all citizens should be able to access education, striving to grant people this right should be high on the agenda. Denying a person access to education is a violation of that person's right.

6 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to research the current status of Deaf community in Namibia and explore their ideas of empowerment of Deaf as well as to understand what impact the ICEIDA development project has had on the life of Deaf individuals. The views of Deaf individuals and their hearing companions were gathered with a participatory method using qualitative interviews and they lay the foundation for the thesis.

The findings of the research suggest that empowerment is an important concept when dealing with development for the Deaf. Empowerment is expected to be an important factor and particularly necessary for Deaf individuals concerning their status in society and lack of access to language often places them below others. Basing on these findings it is crucial that those who work with Deaf are aware of the importance of sign language and are familiar with Deaf culture. It has been argued throughout the research, sign language interpreters are a tool for Deaf to access community. As is clear from the history of Deaf, the Deaf minorities have experienced oppression and still do to some extent. But despite that Deaf people share similar history of marginalization throughout the whole world, it is important to have a clear grasp and an understanding of what meaning the concept empowerment carries for Deaf people in Namibia particularly. The Deaf people in Namibia form a community that is not very visible where few individual have succeeded in achieving higher level education, employment and Deaf people are not visible in any sport or in the public sphere. The sparsely population of Namibia makes the situation of Deaf even more complicated.

But it is clear that since the ICEIDA development project, progress has been made towards inclusion of Deaf within mainstream society. It was argued that because of the establishment of CCDS, people are more aware of issues related to deafness. Deaf are getting more knowledgeable of their rights and old traditional beliefs on the cause of deafness are beginning to

disappear. Sign language has become more accepted and with the SignWiki project this is expected to continue.

On the downside, one of the findings of this research indicates that despite efforts of hearing sign language specialists within Ministry of Education, the establishment of CCDS, the Deaf association NNAD, existence of CLaSH, the success of ICEIDA project, the fact remains that Deaf in Namibia are still excluded from education to a large extent. As the educational system does not provide education after grade 10 nor gives Deaf access to interpreters this remains a barrier. It was concluded that despite the willingness among specialists in Namibia there is still a lack within the government to allow for exceptions when it comes to getting things done.

Nevertheless, the findings also suggest that the foundation for empowerment of Deaf has been laid and the process of change and development has started. As is clear from the research, there is a group of empowered young Deaf Namibians who, through the influence from the development project funded by ICEIDA and with support from hearing companions have the capacity to fight for equality, to fight for their education and for their future. By breaking the barriers to education, negative attitudes will change, other Deaf will follow and the individuals belonging to the Deaf community of Namibia will become participants in their own development.

References

- Adoyo, P. O. (2008). Educating deaf Children in an Inclusive Setting in Kenya: Challenges and Considerations. *The Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education*, 2.
- Ashipala, S. P., Daniel, P., Haikali, M. N., Israel, N., Linus, F. T., Niilenge, H. Haiduwah, T.F., Hashiyanah, R.N. & Morgan, R. (1994). The Development of a Dictionary of Namibian Sign Language. In C. Erting (Ed.), *The Deaf Way: Perspectives from the International Conference on Deaf Culture* (pp.342-346). Washington DC.: Gallaudet University Press.
- Barnard, A. & Spencer, J. (1996). Ethnography. In Barnard, A. & Spencer, J. (Ed), *Encyclopedoa of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (pp. 193-198). London & New York: Routledge.
- Batterbury, S. C. E., Ladd, P., & Gulliver, M. (2007). Sign Language Peoples as indigenous minorities: implications for research and policy. *Environment and Planning A*, 39, 2899-2915.
- Bjarnason, D. (2013) *Próunarmál: Staða fatlaðra*. Retrived 2013 November 2nd at ICEIDA: <http://blog.pressan.is/heimsljos/2013/11/28/throunarmal-stada-fatladra/>
- Bjarnason, D., & Beukes, L.(n. d.). *Signs Speak as Loud as Words. Support to Sign Language Development and Deaf Education in Namibia* (A presentation paper): ICEIDA.
- Bjarnason, D., Stefánsdóttir, V., & Beukes, L. (2012). Signs speak as loud as words: deaf empowerment in Namibia. *Development in Practice*, 22(2).
- Bourdieu, P. (1979/1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. (In translation Richard Nice.) Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Breivik, J.K. (2005). Vulnerable but strong: Deaf people challenge established understandings of deafness. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*. 33 (Suppl 66):18-23.
- Central Intelligence Agency (2013). *The World Factbook*. Retrieved 2013 August 15th at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2147rank.html>
- Central Intelligence Agency (2014). *The World Factbook. Africa:Namibia*. A map of Namibia. Retrieved 2014 May, 6th at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wa.html>

- Conseil-constitutionnel (1789). *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*. Retrieved 2014, January 5th at: http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/root/bank_mm/anglais/cst2.pdf
- Crang, M., & Cook, I. (2007). *Doing Ethnographies*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Davies, C. A. (1999). *Reflexive Ethnography: a Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. London: Routledge.
- Davies, M. B. (2007). *Doing a Successful Research Project. Using Qualitative or Quantitative Methods*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Devlieger, P. (1994). Culture-Based Concepts and Social Life in Sub-Saharan Africa. In C. J. Erting, R. C. Johnson, D. L. Smith & B. D. Snider. (Ed.), *Deaf Way* (pp. 85-93). Washington, DC.: Gallaudet University Press.
- DeWalt, K. M., DeWalt, B. R., & Wayland, C. B. (1998). Participant Observation. In H. R. Bernard (Ed.), *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology* (pp. 259-299). Walnut Creek CA: Altamira Press.
- Eide, A. H., Rooy, G., Loeb, M. E. (2003). *Living conditions among people with activity limitations in Namibia: a representative National survey*, Oslo: SINTEF
- Ellis, J & Yates, D.D. (2010). *Deaf Education for Life: Linking Education and Employment: Conference Report and Follow-up Actions*. Namibia: ICEIDA and Ministry of Education
- Ellis, J. (2011). *Evaluation of ICEIDA Project Signs Speak as Loud as Words*. ICEIDA.
- Foucault, M. (1998). *The Will To Knowledge: The History of Sexuality. Volume 1* (R. Hurley, Trans.). London: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (1966 [2005]). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Science*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books, Limited.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goodale, G. (1995). Training in the Context of Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development. In N. Singh & V. Titi (Eds.), *Empowerment Towards Sustainable Development* (pp. 82-91). Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: Fernwood Publishing & Zed Books Ltd.

- Government of Namibia (1998). Affirmative Action (Employment) Act 29/1998.
- Government of Namibia (2004). *National Disability Policy (1997)*. Namibia.
- Government of Namibia. *Constitution of The Republic of Namibia*. Retrived 2014, January 5th at: <http://www.orusovo.com/namcon/NamCon.pdf>
- Government of the Republic of Namibia (2004). *Vision 2030*. Windhoek: Government of the Republic of Namibia.
- Gramsci, A. (1971 [2011]). *Selection from the prison notebooks*. (Joseph A. Buttigieg, Antonio Callari Trans.) New York: Columbia University Press
- Guðmundsdóttir, Á. (2012). *Hvað gerir góðan táknmálstúlk? Sjónarhorn döff notenda og starfandi túlka*. Reykjavík: Háskóli Íslands.
- Gupta, A., & Ferguson, J. (1997). Discipline and Practice: "The Field" as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology. In A. Gupta & J. Ferguson (Eds.), *Anthropological Locations* (pp.1-46). Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Haualand, H., & Allen, C. (2009). Deaf people and Human Rights. Helsinki, Finland: World Federation of the Deaf and Swedish National Association of the Deaf.
- Humphrey, J. H., & Alcorn, B. J. (2001). *So You Want To Be An Interpreter? An Introduction to Sign Language Interpreting* (Third ed.), Texas: H & H Publishing Company.
- Hunt, L. A. (2007). *Inventing Human Rights: A History*. New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Jankowski, K. A. (1997). *Deaf Empowerment: emergence, struggle & rhetoric*. Washington D. C.: Gallaudet Unicersity Press.
- Kaapama, P. (2007). Commercial land reforms in postcolonial Namibia. What happened to liberation struggle rhetoric? In Melber H.(Ed.). *Transitions in Namibia Which Changes for Whom?*(pp.29-49) Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika Institutet.
- Kiyaga, N. B., & Moores, D. F. (2003). Deafness in Sub-Saharan Africa. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 148(1), 18-24.

- Kotzé, H. (2012). *Status of Disability Rights in Southern Africa*. Retrived October 2nd 2013 at:
http://www.osisa.org/sites/default/files/disability_open_learning_-_overview_final.pdf
- Kreisberg, S. (1992). *Transforming Power: Domination, Empowerment, and Education*. United States of America: State University of New York Press.
- Kreps, G. L. (2000). Disability and Culture: Effects on Multicultural Relations in Modern Organizations. In D. O. Braithwaite & T. L. Thompson (Ed.), *Handbook of Communication and People with Disabilities. Research and Application* (pp. 177-190). New Jersey, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Ladd, P. (2003). *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Ladd, P., Gulliver, M. & Batterbury, S. (2003). *Reassessing Minority Language Empowerment from a Deaf perspective: The other 32 Languages*. Retrived 2013, September 23rd at:
<http://www.aberystwyth.ac.uk/mercator/images/LaddGulliverBatterburypaper0904031.pdf>
- Lane, H. (1999). *The mask of benevolence. Disabeling the Deaf community*. United States: DawnSignPress.
- Lane, H. L., Hoffmeister, R., & Bahan, B. J. (1996). *A Journey into the Deaf-World*. San Diego, Calif.: DawnSignPress.
- Lang, R. (Ed.) (2008). *Disability Policy Audit in Namibia, Swaziland, Malawi and Mozambique*. London: The Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre.
- Martin, D. (1997). Eager to Bite the Hands That Would Feed Them. *The New York Times*, second (June).
- McDermott, R. & Varenne, H. (1995). Culture as Disability. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 26(3), 324-348.
- McIntyre, C. (2007). *Namibia*: England: Bradt Travel Guides.
- Mindess, A. (2006). *Reading Between the Signs: Intercultural Communication for Sign Language Interpreters*: Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing Limited.

- Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2004). *National Report on the Development of Education in Namibia*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Education, Geneva. Retrived 2013 December 3rd at:
http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/namibia_fin.pdf
- Ministry of Education & ICEIDA (2007). *Sign Speak as Loud as Words. Support to the empowerment of the Deaf community in Namibia 2008-2010. Project Document. Draft.*
- Ministry of Education (2008). *The Development of Education 48 Session of International Conference on Education; "Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future"*. Namibia: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (2010). *The National Curriculum for Basic Education*. Namibia: National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), Ministry of Education. Retrieved 2013 December 2nd at:
http://www.nied.edu.na/publications/CurriculumDocuments/NationalCurriculum/National_Curriculum_for_Basic_Education.pdf
- Munoz-Baell, I. M., & Ruiz, M. T. (2000). Empowering the deaf. Let the deaf be deaf. *J Epidemiol Community Health*, 54, 40-44.
- Murray, W. E., & Overton, J. (2003). Designing Development Research. In R. Scheyvens & D. Storey (Ed.), *Development Fieldwork. A Practical Guide* (pp. 17-25). London: Sage Publications.
- Namibia Statistics Agency (2011). *Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census Indicators*. Retrieved 2013 August 6th at:
http://www.nsa.org.na/files/downloads/95e_2011%20Population%20and%20Housing%20Census%20Indicators.pdf
- National Disability Council Act (2004). No. 26/2004.
- Official website of the Paralympic Movement (2012). *No. 18: Namibia takes home first ever gold*. September 14th 2012. Retrieved 2013, January 5th at:
<http://www.paralympic.org/feature/no-18-namibia-takes-home-first-ever-gold>
- Page, N., & Czuba, C. E. (1999). Empowerment: What is it? *Journal of Extension*, 37(5).
- Reynolds, C. R., & Fletcher-Janzen, E. (Ed). (2007). *Encyclopedia of Special Education: A Reference for the Education of Children, Adolescents and Adults with Disabilities and Other Exceptional Individuals*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc
- Rose, H. M., & Smith, A. R. (2000). Sighting Sound/Sounding Sight: The "Violence" of Deaf-Hearing Communication. In D. O. Braithwaite & T. L.

- Thompson (Ed.), *Handbook of Communication and People with Disabilities. Research and Application* (pp. 369-388). New Jersey and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Said, E.W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*: Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Senghas, R.J. & Monaghan, L. (2002). Signs of Their Times: Deaf Communities and the Culture of Language. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31, 69-97.
- Sfgov. (2013). *Tips for Using a Sign Language Interpreter*. Retrieved 2013, January 15th at: <http://www.sfgov2.org/index.aspx?page=451>
- Shultz, K. (2000). Deaf Activists in the Rhetorical Transformation of the Construct of Disability. In D. O. Braithwaite & T. L. Thompson (Ed.), *Handbook of Communication and People with Disabilities. Research and Application* (pp. 257-270). New Jersey; London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- SignWiki (2014). *Efforts are Required to Share Resources and Expertise with Developing Countries*. Retrieved 2014, January 15th at: <http://signwiki.org/about.html>
- SignWiki (2014b). *Web and Mobile Platform for Sign Languages and Deaf Education*. Retrieved 2014, January 15th www.signwiki.org/index.html
- Silverman, David (2006). *Interpreting Qualitative data, Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interaction*, 3.edition. London: Sage Publications.
- Singh, N., & Titi, V. (1995). Empowerment for Sustainable Development: An Overview. In N. S. Vangile Titi (Ed.), *Empowerment Towards Sustainable Development* (pp. 6-28). Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: Fernwood Publishing LTD & Zed Books.
- Stinson, M. S., & Antia, S. D. (1999). Considerations in Educating Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students in Inclusive Settings. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 4(3), 163-175.
- Stokoe, W. (1960) Sign Language Structure: An Outline of the Visual Communication Systems of the American Deaf. *Studies in linguistics: Occasional papers* 8.
- Tandon, Y. (1995). Poverty, Processes of Impoverishment and Empowerment: A Review of Current Thinking and Action. In N. Singh & V. Titi (Ed.),

Empowerment Towards Sustainable Development (pp. 29-36). Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: Fernwood Publishing & Zed Books Ltd.

UN Enable (2013). *High-level meeting of the General Assembly on disability and development, 23 September 2013*. Retrieved 2014, January 3rd at: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1590>

UNDP (1993). *Human Development Report 1993*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

UNDP (2013). *Human Development Report 2013. The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

UNDP (2013b). *Human Development Report 2013. Explanatory note on 2013 HDR composite indices Namibia The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

UNICEF (2013). *The State of the World's Children 2013: Children with disabilities*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

United Nations (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948*. Retrieved 2014, April 3rd at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

United Nations (2011). *Disability and the Millennium Development Goals: A Review of the MDG Process and Strategies for Inclusion of Disability Issues in Millennium Development Goal Efforts*. New York: United Nations. Retrieved December 30th 2013 at: http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/review_of_disability_and_the_mdgs.pdf

United Nations (2013). *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development. The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. New York: United Nations. Retrieved 2014, January 5th at: <http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf>

United Nations (1986) General Assembly. *Declaration on the Right to Development*. New York: United Nations.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006). Retrieved 2014 February 6th at: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

VanderZwaag, D. (1995). *Law Reform for Sustainable Development: Legalizing Empowerment*. In N. Singh & V. Titi (Ed.), *Empowerment*

Towards Sustainable Development (pp. 68-79). Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: Fernwood Publishing & Zed Books Ltd.

Wilson, A. T. (2005). The Effectiveness of International Development Assistance From American Organizations To Deaf Communities In Jamaica. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 150(3).

Wilson, K. (2005b). *A Summary of the provision for deaf children in Namibia. Report from a visit to Namibia in March 2005*. London: The International Deaf Children's Society.

World Bank (2002). *Empowerment and Poverty Reducation: A Sourcebook*. Washington: The World Bank.

World Bank (2009). *Namibia Country Brief*. Washington DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

World Bank (2012). *Population (Total)*. Retrived 2012 August 6th at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>

World Bank (2013). *Statement from the World Bank Group at the UN High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Disability*. Retrieved 2014 January 3rd at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/09/23/statement-from-the-world-bank-group-at-the-un-high-level-meeting-of-the-general-assembly-on-disability>

World Health Organization & World Bank (2011). *World Report on Disability*: Geneva: WHO & World Bank.

World Health Organization (2003). *Address to WHO Staff*. Retrieved 2014 February 2nd at: http://www.who.int/dg/lee/speeches/2003/21_07/en/

World Health Organization (2013). *Deafness and hearing loss*. Retrieved December 14th 2013 at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs300/en/>

World Health Organization (2013b). *Early child development*. Retrieved 2013, September 5th at: http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/child/development/en/

Zimmerman, M. A. (2000). Empowerment Theory Psychological, Organizational and Community Levels of Analysis. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of Community Psychology* (pp.43-63). New York: Kluwer Academic Plenum Publishers.

