Gender and post-disaster reconstruction: An analysis of gendered perceptions and interventions in the context of post-earthquake Pakistan.

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Declaration

I, Eldri L. Berger, declare to the senate of the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB) that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature............................................

Date.....................................................
“When women move forward, the world moves with them”

(CEDPA 2008)
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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of varying ways in which different actors and stakeholders conceptualise and operationalise gender in the Pakistan post-earthquake context. The earthquake affected areas from the 2005 earthquake now find themselves in a reconstructional setting. The degree to which gender considerations and women’s development measures have been incorporated in the reconstruction is studied throughout this thesis. This study is a literature review and analysis, focusing on various post-earthquake reports, briefings and analyses. In order to detect the gendered nature of the reconstruction, the literature has been studied through various perspectives; the post-earthquake gender institutional and policy context, direct reconstructional efforts and finally through the perceptions and perspectives of various stakeholders involved in the reconstruction. It becomes evident throughout the thesis that there are vast challenges in addressing gender and women’s development in the reconstruction. First and foremost, addressing gender issues is a challenge. In particular this applies to the most conservative parts of the earthquake affected areas, where strong patriarchal norms and strict traditional and cultural practice prevail. Moreover during times of crisis a common perception is that gender and women’s development are not pressing issues. The main finding of this study shows that perceptions and understandings are influential in determining how actors conceptualise and operationalise gender considerations. It turns out that the perceptions held by various stakeholders on gender and reconstruction are in fact interlinked with their chosen reconstructional efforts. Looking at the reconstruction as a whole, gender and women’s development approaches are not included in the overall characterisation. However, a number of reconstructional approaches contain gender elements to various degrees. At the policy level, it becomes evident throughout the thesis that the prevailing attitude towards the governmental agencies suggests that the policies are lacking the necessary operational anchorage. It is further argued throughout the thesis that the organisations with the highest probability of including gender considerations in their reconstructional approaches, are the organisations addressing gender issues prior to the earthquake.
# Table of contents

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................. i
Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii
Table of contents ..................................................................................................................... iii
Abbreviations .......................................................................................................................... v

1 **Introduction** ......................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 Problem statement ........................................................................................................... 3
   1.2 Thesis structure .............................................................................................................. 4

2 **The Pakistan earthquake** ..................................................................................................... 5
   2.1 Description of the earthquake area ................................................................................... 5
   2.2 The societal structure of the earthquake area ................................................................. 6
   2.3 The earthquake .............................................................................................................. 9
   2.4 The earthquake response .............................................................................................. 11
   2.5 Gender issues in post-earthquake Pakistan .................................................................... 14
   2.6 Post-earthquake Pakistan .......................................................................................... 16

3.0 **Methodology** ..................................................................................................................... 17
   3.1 Research strategy and design ........................................................................................ 17
   3.2 Literature analysis ......................................................................................................... 18
      3.2.1 Desk study .............................................................................................................. 18
      3.2.2 Literature review procedure .................................................................................... 19
   3.3 Main sources of information ........................................................................................ 20
      3.3.1 International institutions ......................................................................................... 21
      3.3.2 Governmental institutions ....................................................................................... 22
      3.3.3 Local non-governmental organisations .................................................................. 23

4 **Post-earthquake institutional and policy context** ................................................................. 29
   4.1 Earthquake recovery policies ........................................................................................ 29
   4.2 Gender specific recovery ............................................................................................... 32
   4.3 Earthquake recovery policies and gender theory ............................................................. 35
      4.3.1 Gender mainstreaming in ERRA Gender Policy ....................................................... 35
      4.3.2 Empowerment of women ....................................................................................... 38
5 Post-earthquake gender initiatives ................................................................. 42
  5.1 Gendered relief efforts ............................................................................. 42
  5.2 Gendered reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts .................................... 44
    5.2.1 Reconstructional gender efforts .......................................................... 44
    5.2.2 Gender mainstreaming efforts ............................................................ 46
    5.2.3 Women’s empowerment ...................................................................... 49
    5.2.4 Relation between policy and action ..................................................... 53
  5.3 Cultural considerations in earthquake recovery ...................................... 54

6 Perceptions of gender and reconstruction .................................................. 57
  6.1 Gender perceptions among stakeholders ................................................ 57
    6.1.1 International institutions ...................................................................... 59
    6.1.2 Governmental institutions .................................................................... 60
    6.1.3 Local non-governmental organisations ............................................... 62
    6.1.4 Stakeholders’ perceptions .................................................................... 62
  6.2 Reconstructional perceptions – “Build Back Better” strategy .................... 64
  6.3 Implications of various standpoints ........................................................ 66
    6.3.1 Impact of policies and actions .............................................................. 66
    6.3.2 The relationship between policy and action ......................................... 68

7 Concluding remarks .................................................................................... 70

8 References .................................................................................................... 74

List of figures
Figure 2-1: The earthquake affected areas of NWFP and AJK ....................... 10
Figure 4-1: Organisational chart ERRA ......................................................... 30
Figure 4-2: Gender specific organisational chart .......................................... 34
Abbreviations

ADB  Asian Development Bank
AJK  Azad Jammu and Kashmir
CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
DRU  District Reconstruction Unit
ECOSOC United Nations Economic and Social Council
ERP  Early Recovery Plan
ERRA Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority
FRC  Federal Relief Commission
GAD  Gender and Development
GDP  Gross domestic product
GOP  Government of Pakistan
GRAP Gender Reform Action Plan
HDI  Human Development Index
HIC  Humanitarian Information Center
ICIMOD International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IFRC International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IRIN Integrated Regional Information Networks
IRP  International Recovery Platform
IUCN International Union for Conservation of Nature/World Conservation Union
MoWD Ministry of Women’s Development
N.d.  No date (Publishing year not stated in document)
NGO Non-Governmental Organisation
NHDR National Human Development Report
NIC National Identity Card
NWFP North West Frontier Province
OCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PERRA Provincial Earthquake Reconstruction And Rehabilitation Agency
PPP Purchasing power parity
PRCS Pakistan Red Crescent Society
SERRA State Earthquake Reconstruction And Rehabilitation Agency
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SRSP</td>
<td>Sarhad Rural Support Program</td>
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<td>TRC</td>
<td>Transitional Relief Cell</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDAC</td>
<td>United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNESCAP</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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<td>WID</td>
<td>Women in Development</td>
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1 Introduction

In the development field, women’s development and gender issues in general have increasingly gained prominence and realisation of importance (King and Mason 2001). It is acknowledged that empowerment of the poor, particularly women, is important to overcome poverty and development constraints. The idea that poverty has a feminine face is increasingly recognised among various stakeholders in the development field. Nevertheless, women’s development and welfare are among the issues often given a lower priority by the governments. This particularly applies to times of crisis or disasters, where gender concerns are argued to be a luxury that can only be addressed subsequent to the more important matters (IFRC 2006).

Pakistan experienced the most devastating natural disaster in its history on October 8 2005 (ADB/WB 2005). An earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale\(^1\) hit the country’s northern areas. The earthquake caused vast destructions in the affected areas; there are reports of entire towns being wiped to the ground and large numbers of lives lost (ibid). The degree to which people are affected by natural disasters is dependent upon their level of development and vulnerability to such disasters (Yodmani 2001). Developing countries are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters due to their relatively limited resources and fragile livelihoods and housing structure (ibid). The earthquake hit the poorest areas of Pakistan, leaving tremendous impact on human life and social infrastructure (ERRA 2007a). The surviving vulnerable people of the area are now facing the risk of becoming even poorer.

Based on disaster experience, women are often disproportionately affected by natural disasters (Garcia 2007). Widowed women and female-headed households in the earthquake affected areas of Pakistan are particularly relying on a reconstruction in which their needs and concerns are being addressed. According to the UN “recovery that is not engendered is recovery that is endangered” (UN 2005: 10). There are however vast challenges in bringing about a gendered reconstruction in the earthquake affected areas of Pakistan, some of which will be addressed throughout this thesis. Above all the social structures of the society, with its strict conservative norms, are impeding attempts at addressing gender equality (UNDP 2006).

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1 The Richter scale is used to measure the magnitude of an earthquake, making the size of various earthquakes comparable (USGS 2008). The Richter number refers to the epicentre of the earthquake. The magnitude is expressed in whole numbers and decimal fractions. The scale has a logarithmic basis; hence each whole number entails a tenfold increase in measured energy (ibid).
In terms of earthquake recovery, women have limited access to relief and to claiming recovery compensation, due to their traditional restriction on mobility outside the home (ibid).

Along with the Government of Pakistan and numerous international and national organisations delivering relief and recovery assistance, local NGOs have contributed greatly with their knowledge of and anchorage in the affected areas. The roles of the various contributing agencies have differed in terms of implementing, donating and policy making. Hence, based on their focus one could argue that they hold differing perceptions on disaster recovery and gender considerations. Throughout this thesis the rhetoric used by the various agencies about gender and post-earthquake recovery will be explored.

In post-disaster literature, the idea of turning the adversity of the disaster into an opportunity for achieving development is increasingly recognised (IFRC 2006, Erra 2006b). It is believed to be of importance for a successful disaster recovery to cease this “window of opportunity”. In post-tsunami literature from Sri Lanka it is emphasised how the tsunami aftermath has provided an opportunity for women to partake in decisions that affects their lives (Prasad N.d.). They have been offered the opportunity of participating in the rebuilding of their families and the society (ibid). After the initial emergency relief, the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) in Pakistan launched their “Build Back Better” strategy for the earthquake reconstruction (ERRA 2006b). The strategy seems to correspond with the “window of opportunity” idea as it is not only aiming at bricks and buildings but also seeks to change the society in a positive way (ibid). The views and perceptions on the issue of a “window of opportunity” among various agencies working in the earthquake affected areas will be elaborated towards the end of the thesis.

It is now more than two years since the occurrence of the earthquake in Pakistan 2005. Numerous reports have been written on the initial relief and on the beginning of the reconstruction. The literature can generally be divided in two directions; the ones accounting for the policies and “best practices” and the ones reporting on activities, efforts and implementations. The large amount of literature and the inconsistency in the relation between policy documents and action-oriented reports are obstacles in gaining an overview of the relationship between policy and action. An attempt will be made throughout this thesis to merge this gap. Few studies have so far analysed the published reports in themselves and even fewer have approached the material with a gendered focus. Looking into available reports,
briefings and analyses will provide an insight into the gendered nature of the Pakistani earthquake recovery. In addition to the written reports, the policies and programme priorities of the agencies and organisations themselves should also cast a light on their perceptions of gender in reconstruction. An overall acknowledgement throughout the social sciences is the idea that the perceptions and actions of human beings are interlinked variables in the sense that the actions we undertake are influenced by the perceptions we hold of ourselves, other people, our surroundings and vice versa (Hurley 1998). Bearing this in mind, an examination of the perceptions held on gender and reconstruction by various stakeholders in the earthquake recovery, might offer insight to the reconstructional approaches chosen.

1.1 Problem statement

The aim of this study is to analyse varying ways in which different actors and stakeholders conceptualise and operationalise gender in the Pakistan post-earthquake context. This will be explored through various perspectives as presented in the literature available on the earthquake reconstruction. The post-earthquake institutional and policy context will be studied in order to gain insight in the perceptions of the governmental agencies in addition to learning about the context in which other stakeholders will operate. Furthermore, the practical efforts undertaken by various stakeholders and their underlying perceptions will provide information about how gender is conceptualised and operationalised. Additionally, the cultural context of the earthquake affected areas, in which the various actors operate, will be explored.

The main objective of this thesis is to learn about post-disaster reconstruction from a gendered point of view. In order to address the stated objective, five sub-objectives have been identified. Firstly, an understanding of the pre-earthquake gender context in the earthquake affected areas is needed. This will be addressed through an exploration of various gender commitments in international and national policies, pre-earthquake development measures and agencies and organisations committed to gender and women’s issues in the area prior to the earthquake. Secondly, an examination of the earthquake’s impacts on gender relations and women’s development is also needed. The impact on gender relations and on various pre-earthquake women’s initiatives will be studied. A third sub-objective is to investigate the post-earthquake institutional and policy context. Here, an analysis of various policies for the relief and reconstruction in addition to the policies addressing gender issues will be studied.
The fourth sub-objective is related to creating an understanding of the degree to which the hitherto relief and reconstructional efforts have been gendered. In order to address this objective, an operational analysis of actions undertaken by various actors and stakeholders will be conducted. Finally, the fifth sub-objective is based on the assumption that the perceptions held by the various stakeholders on gender concepts and on the importance of gender in disaster reconstruction, will influence their operational choices and actions undertaken. Herein, the perceptions of international, governmental and local organisations will be analysed.

Eight districts of the provinces North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) were hit particularly hard when the earthquake hit. Issues of gender mainstreaming, empowerment of women and gendered earthquake recovery will be illuminated through various efforts carried out in the earthquake affected areas of NWFP and AJK. The strong traditional ties and conservative nature of the societal structure in the area makes gender and women’s empowerment approaches particularly interesting. Moreover, the vast earthquake devastations which required reconstructional efforts in every sphere of the society also contributed to the choice of area, as this would enable an investigation of gender and empowerment efforts in several projects. The issues in question will be illuminated through initiatives in the reconstructional phase of the earthquake recovery.

1.2 Thesis structure

Establishing the context for the thesis, chapter two deals with the occurrence of the earthquake and outlines the relief and recovery periods. In the following chapter the methods applied throughout the thesis are outlined in addition to a description of the main sources of information. Chapter four presents the post-earthquake institutional and policy context in addition to relevant gender theory. Following up on the policies provided chapter five looks into the gendered post-earthquake efforts undertaken by various stakeholders and hence assesses the relation between policy and practice. In the following chapter the agencies themselves are examined in terms of their perceptions of gender and the resulting policy implications from their perceptions. Chapter seven summarises the main points of the thesis and concludes.
2 The Pakistan earthquake

On October 8 2005 an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale hit northern parts of Pakistan (ADB/WB 2005). The earthquake is being portrayed as the most debilitating natural disaster in the history of the country. The earthquake epicentre was located north-northeast of Islamabad. Owing to its magnitude the tremors were felt across a wide distance in the region, even within the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan and western Bangladesh. Eight districts of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) were hit particularly hard by the earthquake (ibid). The final number of lives lost in the earthquake is well over 73,000 people with another 70,000-100,000 injured (NDMA 2007). To contextualise the earthquake and its response a brief description of the earthquake area and its societal structure will be provided initially. The occurrence of the earthquake and its response will be returned to towards the end of the chapter.

2.1 Description of the earthquake area

Situated in the Himalayan region Pakistan is among the countries in the world most prone to natural disasters (Khan 2007). Due to the relatively young and unstable mountain ranges and the geologically immature ground, the risks of earthquakes, landslides and floods are high (ibid; OCHA 2006). Pakistan’s vulnerability to earthquakes, as demonstrated in the October 2005 disaster, has been further confirmed through post earthquake studies showing the continued risk and vulnerability (OCHA 2006).

The NWFP and AJK both have highly rugged mountainous terrain where the people have settled, even at high altitudes in small rural communities (ADB/WB 2005). Even prior to the earthquake, the scattered settlements in the mountainous areas were somewhat isolated due to the lack of roads. Hence once the earthquake hit the relief and rescue faced hardships in terms of accessibility. As mentioned, the rural settlements face high vulnerability to natural hazards, particularly landslides of which occur frequently in the area. In addition to the vulnerability to natural disasters among the rural communities, the urban dwellers also face grave vulnerabilities. The development of the urban areas is unchecked and hence often holds few environmental safeguards (ibid). Additionally, settlements are becoming more prone to risks

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2 Azad Jammu and Kashmir is the Pakistan-administered area of Kashmir. Pakistan and India have been in dispute over the Kashmir area ever since 1947 (ADB/WB 2005).
due to the increased pressure on land and natural resources as a consequence of the high population growth in the area (ERRA 2006a).

The main sources of employment in the earthquake affected areas are agriculture and livestock rearing (ADB/WB 2005). Most of the rural population take on subsistence farming and engage in small scale trading for the purpose of enhancing their livelihood security. In the affected urban areas, a large proportion of the people work as administrative personnel. Additionally, sources of income are mostly found in the informal sector with trading, small scale businesses and construction and transport (ibid).

2.2 The societal structure of the earthquake area

According to the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank some 5.7 million people live in the hardest hit region, i.e. the eastern districts of NWFP and the AJK (please see figure 2-1 for map over the earthquake affected area) (ADB/WB 2005). The settlements are scattered ranging in size from two households up to more than 300 houses gathered in a community. About 88 percent of the population of the region live in rural mountainous areas, as compared to approximately 72 percent rural dwellers of the total country population. The average number of people in a household is seven (ibid).

Poverty is the main development challenge in Pakistan according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB 2002). Pakistan’s National Human Development Report of 2003 estimates variations in poverty levels both across and within the different provinces of the country (Hussain 2003). The tool employed is the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in which economic growth, education, health and the quality of life are calculated to indicate a certain level of poverty. In all the categories, the North West Frontier Province rank below the country average. For the province as a whole educational and economic indicators are ranking among the lowest in the country. The HDI rankings show great disparities among the various districts of NWFP (ibid). According to the

\[\text{Livelihood refers to the “capabilities, assets both material and social resources – and strategies that people use to make a living; that is, to achieve food and income security through a variety of economic activities” (ERRA 2007a: 21).}\]

\[\text{HDI – UNDP’s Human Development Index; measures human development through a broader definition of well-being than the GDP per capita, includes three dimensions of human development; living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being educated (measured by adult literacy and school enrolment at primary, secondary and tertiary level) and having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity, PPP, income) (UNDP 2008).}\]
NWFP Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper\(^5\) of 2003, the incidence of poverty in the province is substantially higher compared to the country as a whole (Government of NWFP 2003). 33 percent of the Pakistani population live below the poverty line\(^6\) while the percentage is 43 percent in NWFP. The poverty rates in NWFP vis-à-vis the rest of the country are higher for both the urban and the rural populations. Additionally the average per-capita consumption expenditures are lower in the province compared to those for the entire country (ibid). There are remarkable differences between AJK and NWFP in terms of development figures (IUCN 2006). In general, the affected areas of AJK have a higher level of development than the earthquake affected areas of NWFP. According to the World Conservation Union (International Union for Conservation of Nature, IUCN) there are a number of underlying factors contributing to this divide; the AJK communities are more exposed to the outside world than the most conservative areas of NWFP, there is generally a higher literacy rate and women’s empowerment rate and there seems to be better socio-economic conditions in AJK (ibid).

The dominant pre-earthquake thinking on gender roles patterns in Pakistan has been that roles and responsibilities between men and women are divided on a traditional basis (UNDP 2006). Men have been viewed as the heads of households, income earners and farmers, while women have merely been seen as secondary earners and housewives. Hence, in line with dominant development thinking men were the targets in the development approaches prior to the earthquake. It is important to note however that gender roles are socially constructed roles determining the responsibilities of men and women at any given time in any given society. Accordingly, the roles and responsibilities are the results of perceptions within the society and the communities as well as among various actors in the development field. For development initiatives to be successful it is important to be aware of the fact that the roles and responsibilities are dynamic and that they may vary within and across societies (ibid). This is true for the men and women in the earthquake affected areas as well. The predominant societal structure in the earthquake affected areas is deeply patriarchal (ADB 2000). Traditionally men and women belong to different spheres of the society of which determine their roles and responsibilities. Home is predominantly defined to be women’s space, whereas

\(^{5}\) Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) describe a country’s economic and social policies to reduce poverty and promote economic growth (WB 2008). In Pakistan each province develops its own PRSP.

\(^{6}\) The poverty line is a commonly used standard for measuring consumption or income related poverty (ADB 2002). Like poverty itself, poverty lines are relative to the country in question. The poverty line for Pakistan was in 1999 defined at Rs. 670 per capita per month (ibid).
men dominate the world outside the home. These ideological ideas of men and women are founded in the religious and cultural practices of seclusion (ibid; Aikman and Unterhalter 2005). Women are restricted in their everyday lives through purdah, the practice in which defines women’s allowed interaction with the outside world. Women are to be protected from contact with all men that are not family members; hence women’s proper space is defined as the home (ibid). Additionally, with the concept of honour highly valued and respected, the mobility of women is strictly restricted (ADB 2000). In their Pakistan Poverty Profile, ADB states that “women suffer from poverty of opportunities throughout their life cycle” (ADB 2002: 14). Gender inequalities prevail in the social, legal, economic and political spheres, making women’s prospects of education and skills appropriation, job opportunities and participation in decision making poor (ibid). Consequently, women are socially and economically dependent upon their male family members, something of which reinforces the traditional male power over women (ADB 2000). In the above mentioned NHDR for Pakistan it is argued that empowerment of the poor, women in particular is a prerequisite in order to overcome poverty (Hussain 2003).

In certain communities in the North West Frontier Province, particularly in remote rural areas, women live under the most conservative conditions in the country (UNDP 2006). Relative to men most women in the province have considerably less political influence, participation in economic and social processes and control over their own lives (ibid). Women additionally have limited options for employment activities outside of the households (ADB/WB 2005). Notwithstanding there are differences in women’s status within the societies as well as between the two provinces AJK and NWFP (UNDP 2006). Due to a number of labour migrating men in AJK, there are a greater proportion of women-headed households in the area compared to that of the NWFP (ibid). As a matter of fact NWFP rank with the highest gender disparities of the country (Government of NWFP 2003). The gaps between men and women are significant in measures of economy, health, education, employment and other socio-economic indicators. Additionally, the gender gaps seem to be wider in rural than urban areas (ibid).
2.3 The earthquake

The earthquake caused severe damage all over the earthquake affected area (NDMA 2007). Villages were ruined and entire towns were wiped to the ground. An estimated 600,000 homes were destroyed and about 3.5 million people were rendered homeless (ibid). According to estimations made by Oxfam the earthquake destroyed 84 percent of the houses in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and 36 percent of the houses in North West Frontier Province (IRIN 2006). In addition to people’s homes, the earthquake also destroyed their school buildings, colleges, work places, government buildings and health facilities (NDMA 2007). Over 73 percent of the total health facilities were destroyed. Additionally, extensive damage was caused to infrastructure, roads, bridges, power supplies, telecommunications, water pipes and the sanitation facilities (ibid).

The earthquake hit during Ramadan, the holy month, and hence a large number of people were trapped in their houses as they were following the traditional routines of Ramadan (IRIN 2006). Occurring in the morning, the earthquake caught a number of adults in their beds asleep after taking their predawn meal according to the traditions of Ramadan. Accordingly they did not manage to escape in time (ibid).

In NWFP and AJK a vast number of school buildings were damaged or completely destroyed (UNESCO 2006). In the eight districts most affected by the earthquake in NWFP and AJK respectively 46 and 96 percent of the school buildings were damaged (ibid). For the children in the area Saturday is a normal school day, hence the majority of students and children were having classes when the earthquake hit (IRIN 2006). More than 18,000 students and school children and 900 teachers were killed in the earthquake or in any of its repercussions (UNESCO 2006).

Considering the fact that the majority of the population in the affected area sustain themselves with agricultural activities, the earthquake had an enormous impact on their livelihood capabilities (ADB/WB 2005). Most of the livestock to which people’s food and income relied, were killed in the earthquake (ERRA 2006a; IUCN 2006). Additionally, the earthquake caused severe environmental damage to the agricultural land for crops in terraces and slopes as well as for livestock grazing (ibid). Furthermore, water resources and irrigation systems were also severely affected, something of which might impede the agricultural production for
a long time if not rehabilitated (IUCN 2006). Accordingly, the means for making a living have diminished. The nutrition status of the people of the area was a concern early in the reconstruction according to the World Conservation Union (IUCN). It was stated that agricultural interventions in terms of restoring irrigation systems, crop production and animal husbandry were vital in order to restore sustainable livelihoods (ibid).

*Figure 2-1: the earthquake affected areas of NWFP and AJK*

2.4 The earthquake response

As with any large scale operation, the earthquake response has received a lot of attention and scrutiny. Perceptions of the speed of the relief, ranging from disastrously slow to successfully accomplished, the presence of the military and the funding provided compared to the Indian Ocean tsunami are among the debated and contested issues (IRIN 2006; Munir and Jamal 2005). However the response has also gained recognition for its unusual effectiveness in terms of coordination and commitment (IRIN 2006). It is a common understanding that the joint effort at avoiding the feared second wave of deaths due to the upcoming Himalayan winter was a success (NDMA 2007; UNDP 2006; IRIN 2006).

The disaster history of Pakistan reveals that the country has been exposed mainly to flood disasters in the past (Khan 2007). Hence, prior to the 2005 earthquake, most disaster management and preparedness measures were designed to manage such disasters. Accordingly when the earthquake hit on October 8, Pakistan did not have a central authority dedicated to manage and coordinate relief from earthquake hazards (ibid). The initial response is described as incoherent due to the absence of an established body to handle earthquakes like the October 8 disaster (ERRA 2006b). Within two days of the earthquake the Government of Pakistan established the Federal Relief Commission (FRC) to undertake these tasks (NDMA 2007). In the initial relief with a vast number of agencies there was a great need for inter-agency coordination of which was to become one of the main tasks of the FRC (ERRA 2006b). Additionally, the government established the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) on the 24th of October mandated to plan and coordinate the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase of which was to replace the initial relief phase (ERRA 2006b). Once the relief phase was declared over, the FRC merged into the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ibid).

Within the first hours and days after the earthquake, people from all over the country rushed to the affected areas to offer their assistance (IRIN 2006). They distributed goods to the affected people and contributed with physical assistance (ibid). In accordance with experience from former disasters, the importance of the immediate relief provided by the people themselves is immense (Telford et al. 2006). National and international rescue teams need a certain time to respond. The local people from nearby districts however are likely to reach the affected areas before everyone else (ibid). In Pakistan the army was among the first to provide
relief (IRIN 2006). Considering the fact that the Government of Pakistan is military-led, an active role of the military was obvious to the government. Due to the turbulent situation in Kashmir and the Pakistani military’s presence in the area, the army was able to respond shortly after the earthquake. The military contributed with troops providing rescue and relief, a number of helicopters at rescue teams’ disposal and coordinating efforts in collaboration with the federal government (ibid).

The presence and central role of the military during the relief phase has been a debated issue, particularly among human rights-based organisations (IRIN 2006). Among the issues debated, the military has been criticised for bypassing the administration in the earthquake affected areas. It is important to note however that the local authorities themselves were damaged by the earthquake and hence to a certain extent incapable of providing efficient leadership in the disaster’s aftermath. It is also important to note that the Pakistani army actually holds a positive reputation for its services to the people as opposed to certain parts of the civil authority, e.g. the police force. According to the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) the presence of the Pakistani army was generally welcomed by the people (ibid).

In addition to the Pakistani people themselves, the remaining undamaged sections of the local authorities and the Pakistani army, the Government of Pakistan has been praised for its quick response (ADB/WB 2005). As mentioned, the government established the Federal Relief Commission and later the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority as a first step in the acknowledgement of its lack of capacity to lead and organise the earthquake response (NDMA 2007). In the initial relief phase, the government established tent camps for the earthquake affected population and distributed tents, blankets, medicine etc (ADB/WB 2005). The government also developed a compensation program to benefit surviving relatives of the deceased and injured (ibid). Later, a compensation scheme was developed for the reconstruction of houses and livelihoods (ERRA 2006b).

The international community was also a great contributor to the relief and recovery (ADB/WB 2005; IRIN 2006). Within a few days a vast amount of donations, in-kind and monetary had been made and international aid and relief agencies were arriving in the earthquake affected areas. A vast number of international NGOs, donors, the Red Cross/Red

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7The Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) is the humanitarian news and analysis service of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (IRIN 2008).
Crescent movement and various agencies from the United Nations all provided relief to the people of the earthquake affected areas. It is reported that more than 79 countries provided initial support in the form of tents, blankets, medical equipment, helicopters and the like. Considering the remoteness of the affected areas, the earthquake relief providers all faced a joint challenge in distributing the goods to the rural villages. As mentioned there was a grave need for helicopters in this phase. The immediate response rendered possible by all of the various contributors’ efforts has been characterised to be unusually effective in terms of coordination and commitment. This is evident in the coordination of the large number of helicopters, foreign as well as domestic provided to the disposal of relief and rescue (ibid).

Considering the fact that local health workers, teachers and governmental personnel were either killed in the earthquake themselves or taking care of their surviving family members in the aftermath, the earthquake response required human resources as well as the traditional in-kind relief aid supplies (NDMA 2007). National and international health care personnel provided health care in the numerous relief camps as well as offering health consultations to the people living in shelters nearby their destroyed homes. Once the relief camps were functioning, tents were provided for temporary schooling. Aiming to provide the children with a sense of normality to deal with the trauma cause by the earthquake, these improvised schooling facilities were a top priority among the earthquake relief agencies (ibid).

Both the immediate relief phase and the more long term reconstruction and development process have faced numerous challenges in the earthquake response (IRIN 2006). The mountainous nature of the area in addition to the blocking of the roads as a consequence of the earthquake and its aftershocks and landslides, has posed severe difficulties in terms of access and thus also the delivery of aid to the affected areas. In the initial relief phase helicopters were facing hardships in terms of landing areas and some of the most remote villages were forced to wait for days before they saw rescue teams and helicopters. Furthermore, the selection of sites for displaced people’s camps was also difficult considering the steep mountainous terrain. As the harsh Himalayan winter was approaching, providing winterised shelter was among the top priorities of the relief. The camps were met with reluctance however as a vast number of people in the earthquake affected areas feared the loss of land rights. Some people thus chose to stay in shelters close to their homes during the winter while others moved to camps (ibid).
Additional challenges in the earthquake relief and recovery were caused by the strong cultural and religious conservatism of the earthquake affected areas (Fida 2006). Subsequent to the initial relief period, in the transition from relief to the more long term reconstruction, rural communities have begun questioning international NGOs’ presence in the area. A majority of religious leaders in the communities have started expressing their reluctance to the efforts as they are argued to be opposing traditional cultural norms (Fida 2006).

2.5 Gender issues in post-earthquake Pakistan

A lesson learnt from previous natural disasters in the region is that gender has received very little attention during humanitarian response (UNDP 2006). Based on the experience from earthquakes in Afghanistan and Gujarat, India and the Indian Ocean tsunami in Sri Lanka, a gendered analysis was called for in the Pakistan earthquake response. Despite a number of agencies attempting to advocate for the importance of gender analyses, it seems that the government did not perceive it to be a prioritised issue throughout its relief operations (ibid). Notwithstanding, gender-based analyses have still been carried out by other stakeholders in the relief and recovery response (Shirkat Gah 2006). Their subsequent actions to address gender issues in their response will be elaborated further in chapter five. Through an evaluation of the earthquake initial response, the Pakistan division of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recognises in retrospect that overall the gender analyses were insufficiently carried out during the humanitarian response (UNDP 2006). Nevertheless, the needs for such analyses are highlighted and are advised for the recovery and reconstruction phase. It is argued that a gendered analysis of the impact of various projects on the time, roles and resources of women and men would influence project designs towards more needs based objectives. According to UNDP in the early emergency relief, women’s access to relief resources was poor and their personal needs were given little attention. An example from the conservative environment of the North West Frontier Province is illustrative. The women’s recovery was adversely affected by the shortage of female doctors, something of which impeded the women in need of health care as they refused to be examined by male doctors (ibid).

The number of female-headed households increased drastically as a consequence of the earthquake (ERRA 2007a). These households comprises of widowed women as well as women caring for their disabled husbands and other sick or needy family members (ibid). The
number of female-headed households prior to the earthquake was 5-10 percent (ADB 2000). Even before the devastating earthquake, there was a trend of growing numbers of female-headed households. According to the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA 2007a) post-earthquake female-headed households represents more than 26% in the affected areas.

A general trend in the post-earthquake literature states that the roles and responsibilities of women and men have changed profoundly in the aftermath of the earthquake (UNDP 2006; Oxfam International 2006a; ERRA 2007b). These statements are based on the dominant understanding of the gendered roles in the area prior to the earthquake, i.e. they are based on the assumptions of actors in the development field. Accordingly, post-earthquake assessments are to a large degree following the same assumptions. However, there are regional differences in women’s roles and responsibilities. Hence, it is important to note that the registered facts might not apply to the roles and responsibilities of all women in the area. Nevertheless, studies show that the total workload of men and women has increased as they have been forced to undertake new tasks in order to ensure the recovery of their families (UNDP 2006; Oxfam International 2006a; ERRA 2007b). Hence, the communities and families have experienced a shift in traditional roles of both men and women. For women, their traditional gender roles in terms of home management have been supplemented with taking on responsibilities as breadwinners for an extended family and also taking care of the land and the livestock. In cases where the women have lost their male partners, their roles have been extended to heads of households and decision makers (ibid). The change in the head of household structure is perceived to have severe impact on the development in the area, due to women’s rather limited access to resources (IRIN 2006). Women have experienced a great deal of constraints related to the relief and recovery (ibid). Women’s access to supplies, service delivery, various types of compensation etc has been disproportionately lower than what has been accrued to men (UNDP 2006; ERRA 2007a). According to Sungi Development Foundation, a Pakistan-based NGO working in the North West Frontier Province, the social norms prevalent in the province are not encouraging the women of which has recently become widowed or heads of households to access their entitled relief (Sungi 2006).
2.6 Post-earthquake Pakistan

The recovery process in the earthquake affected areas can be divided into various stages. The initial response after the earthquake is characterised by rescue and relief (ERRA 2006b). The emergency operation officially ended on the 31st of March 2006 (HIC 2006). Replacing the relief, a transitional period marked the shift from relief to reconstruction (ibid). Due to the vast devastations caused by the earthquake it is believed that more than a decade will be needed for the recovery (IRIN 2006). Based on the experience from other disasters the reconstruction efforts eventually fades into the more long term development actions.

As mentioned, the initial response to the earthquake is described as incoherent (ERRA 2006b). This is mainly due to the lack of an earthquake response authority to deal with the recovery immediately after the disaster occurred (ibid). Nevertheless, the emergency relief aid is being described by a number of stakeholders as efficient, well organised and ensuring good results in terms of response (UNICEF 2008; IRIN 2006). After the initial relief phase attempts were made by aid agencies as well as by the government to bridge the transition from relief to recovery (IRP 2007). Long-term planning and rebuilding efforts were undertaken and relief camps were gradually shut down after ongoing replacements of their residents. Compensation schemes and safe housing construction guidelines were developed and houses are continuously being rebuilt (ibid).

The earthquake affected people and the personnel and agencies working with the earthquake recovery have undergone grave changes in their lives as well as in the means of working in the aftermath of the earthquake. Bringing about development and aiming at altering the social and economic situation prior to the earthquake, rather than recreating the former normalities is commonly referred to as imperative to achieve a successful recovery (UNDP 2006). This requires linking poverty reduction measures and gender issues to the recovery policies and actions (Beck 2005). The agencies’ views and perceptions of recovery strategies and of gender issues might be influencing the approaches they prefer. Their positioning of gender in post-earthquake policies and in relation to the implementation of reconstruction efforts will contribute largely to the understanding of the gendered nature of the earthquake recovery. These issues will be discussed in the remainder of the thesis. Firstly however, chapter three will describe the sources of information employed throughout the thesis.
3.0 Methodology

This chapter will provide a description of the methods applied throughout the thesis. Being a desk study of which the data employed are purely second hand material, a description of the main sources of information will also be provided.

Throughout the thesis a distinction is made between efforts of gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women. As gender mainstreaming and empowerment are interlinked issues, the purpose of distinguishing the two is for better structuring of the discussion. Gender mainstreaming will be discussed as a technical term referring to attempts at incorporating considerations of gender into all decision making, policy making and impact analyses of projects and programmes. Empowerment on the other hand will be discussed in relation to more people centred approaches, being well aware however that empowerment also has components at planning and policy levels.

Throughout the thesis the phrases information sources, or categorised agencies will be applied when referring to the agencies providing the various reports, briefings, analyses, books etc. The categorised agencies are divided into three categories forming the information basis of this thesis. The categories will be outlined towards the end of this chapter. The terms agencies and institutions will be used as collective terms when referring to the local non-governmental organisations, governmental agencies and thirdly international organisations and varying bodies within the UN system that comprise the sources of this thesis.

3.1 Research strategy and design

Throughout the process of collecting and analysing data, literature in my case, a qualitative research strategy has been employed. Alan Bryman (2004) refers to studies attempting to understand the social world as qualitative in nature, as opposed to more quantifiable strategies. A qualitative study often selects certain specific parts of the social world and interprets the social systems within this distinct world (ibid). In this thesis a case study design was chosen for the performance of the qualitative strategy. According to Bryman, a case or a setting is chosen in the case study design (Bryman 2004). Thereafter, the researcher studies the particular nature of the chosen case through an intensive examination (ibid).
The post-earthquake context of Pakistan is the chosen case for this thesis. The earthquake reconstructonal phase was perceived to constitute a suitable context for exploring the thesis objectives. The main objective was to learn about post-disaster reconstruction from a gendered point of view. In order to address this objective, sub-objectives as described in chapter one were identified. The first sub-objective was to establish an understanding of the pre-earthquake gender context in the earthquake affected areas. The second sub-objective was to examine the earthquake’s impact on gender relations and women’s development. Further, an investigation of the post-earthquake institutional and policy context was a third objective. The fourth sub-objective was to create an understanding of the degree to which the relief and reconstruction has been gendered. Herein, an operational analysis of actions undertaken by the various actors and stakeholders was conducted. The fifth sub-objective was to investigate the ways the actors and stakeholders conceptualise gender and the impact this might have on their performance.

### 3.2 Literature analysis

The methods applied for reviewing and analysing the existing literature on gender and women’s development in Pakistan in general and in the earthquake reconstruction in particular will be presented in this section. Firstly a few theoretical features related to reviewing and analysing literature will be discussed, before a description of the procedure applied in this thesis will be provided.

#### 3.2.1 Desk study

The essence of this thesis is based upon existing literature and data on gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women in Pakistan. Additionally, literature with a gendered perspective on the earthquake reconstruction has also been employed. My main sources of information are reports, articles and books originating from various organisations and agencies relating to gender issues in the earthquake reconstruction in Pakistan. Methodically this entails an analysis based upon second hand information, i.e. information I as a researcher has not gathered myself (Bryman 2004). Throughout the thesis I use already published reports and articles as my source of information. Additionally, data gathered for statistical purposes is being used for conducting what Alan Bryman (2004) calls secondary analysis. I use data collected by other researchers and analyse these in accordance with my research questions.
According to Bryman the benefits of secondary analyses is that they are time and cost saving in addition to providing reliable and good quality data, provided the sources have been critically selected. It is important to note however that the data may have been collected for other purposes than your own and that the research institution may not have checked the quality and reliability of the data collection (ibid). Hence, there is a possibility for misinterpretation of the data. Additionally it is important to note that I as a researcher may be biased in my search for data and what I perceive to be appropriate literature. As a western woman living in Norway there is a risk that my views on women’s conditions in certain conservative areas of Pakistan are biased. This bias might influence my interpretations of reports and policies from the earthquake affected areas. It is important to be aware of ones own predetermined ideas in order to remain control of the preconceived interpretations, as they will always be a part of any researcher, as much as any person in general.

3.2.2 Literature review procedure

The situation of women in Pakistan receives enormous attention, nationally as well as internationally. A vast amount of literature exists on the importance of women’s development in Pakistan and on various development and empowerment initiatives. The relief and reconstruction efforts subsequent to the South Asia earthquake are also widely covered in reports, briefings and analyses. Reports covering the gendered nature of the earthquake response are somewhat fewer in number, but equally informative. Additionally, a selection of documents has also contributed in terms of transferral value from other similar disaster contexts. Experience from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Sri Lanka and the 2001 Gujrat earthquake in India provide useful lessons for the situation of earthquake reconstruction in Pakistan. A grave challenge throughout the course of this thesis has been to critically filter reliable sources. The Internet provides easy access to articles published both with higher and lower degrees of professional liability, hence the need to filter ones sources. Throughout the thesis I have merely used sources that I perceive to be reliable, such as articles from well-established and renowned organisations or from agencies I have found to be knowledgeable on gender, women’s development and the earthquake reconstruction.

Being the only source of information throughout the thesis the literature has been carefully selected. The process of approaching and getting familiar with the literature has required a systematic assessment of various sources and their reports. Their degree of relevance in
relation to gender issues in Pakistan in general and particularly in the earthquake reconstruction, has been constantly considered. For the purpose of organising the perceived to be relevant literature, the agencies with their respective articles have been categorised according to topic, approach and impact/contribution. Following this categorisation, subcategories were identified to ease the further search within the articles. Some of the subcategories worth mentioning are orientation (policy oriented, analytically oriented or oriented towards implementation), gender approach, empowerment approach, gendered reconstruction approach, position in terms of participation etc. Within each approach attempts were made at detecting what the articles revealed about the agencies’ means of achieving the goals within the respective approach. A search through the literature on the empowerment approach for instance, revealed participatory approaches to decision making, education, vocational training and advocacy as some of the priority areas in terms of bringing about empowerment for women in Pakistan. Further the articles were either selected or discarded based on their degree of relevance.

The agencies providing information on empowerment of women and on a gendered earthquake reconstruction have been grouped into three categories according to organisational structure and the kind of contribution they offer. The categories of information sources are based on the organisational structure of the agencies, i.e. whether being an international organisation or research institution, a government agency, or a national or local non-governmental organisation. In the following a brief description of the three categories will be provided.

3.3 Main sources of information

The above mentioned categorisation led to an understanding of the types of reports, briefings and analyses the various agencies provide. The agencies and their respective literature are selected particularly for their active focus on gender. Most agencies were also present in the earthquake affected areas, working with the communities on gender relations and empowerment before the earthquake hit. Below follows a brief description of the three categorised agencies. It is important to note however that the different standpoints held by the agencies will necessarily colour the reports provided.
3.3.1 International institutions

Based on the literature relevant to this thesis, it seems that the international institutions adopt positions of research, analyses, policy recommendations and best practices provision. Whether being a regional research institution, a foreign government development agency, an international NGO, a funding institution or a unit of the UN system, their contributions are of a more profound theoretical art. Nevertheless, merely focusing on their theoretical contributions would be to severely undermine their extraordinary efforts and inputs of particularly humanitarian, political and economic character. The immense efforts undertaken on different levels in the societies can not be easily disregarded, nor is that the intention of this section. For the scope of this thesis however, the more theoretical literature provided the necessary supplement to the other categories of information sources.

Agencies working with or in Pakistan on gender issues prior to the 2005 earthquake as well as institutions addressing gender issues during earthquake reconstruction have been sources of information. Following a brief overview of issues dealt with in the articles of relevance will be provided. A number of documents are concerned with various implications of addressing, or not addressing, certain issues. Implications for whether or not matters of gender issues in disaster reconstruction are addressed or whether women’s empowerment is advocated are among the institution’s contributions. A selection of documents has also contributed in terms of transferral value from other similar disaster contexts, such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami and the Gujrat earthquake in India. Additionally, various agencies undertake project assessments and occasional country-wise development updates of which has also been useful.

The many components of the UN system comprise one of the largest humanitarian entities that are working in Pakistan (NDMA 2007). The UN specialised agencies, programmes, funds and secretariats of most relevance to gender issues in general and in the earthquake response in particular are the United Nations Development Fund, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Development Fund for Women, United Nations Children’s Fund, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This list is not exclusive, nor does it intend to be. Of agencies outside the UN system, apart from foreign countries’ governmental development agencies, organisations providing relevant information are: the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, Oxfam International, the International
Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Mercy Corps and many more. The literature from the international institutions constitutes the largest number of reports and analyses as they are 58 in numbers. These are relating directly to the Pakistan earthquake. Additionally, literature on lessons learned from other disasters, best practices in terms of disaster management, gender issues and general development analyses have been useful works of reference.

3.3.2 Governmental institutions

The resources from the Government of Pakistan are mainly policy documents, texts of laws passed, newsletters/briefings and various updates in terms of women’s status and earthquake reconstruction updates. For the most part these documents have been detected from the government’s own internet resources. However, reports presented before committees at international meeting points are also found at the host agency’s internet resources. The governmental institutions have provided 20 post-earthquake reports and policies of direct relevance to this thesis. Apart from one report from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the reports are mainly from the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA). These are reports and policy papers where reconstruction alone or gender and reconstruction are the issues. Additional literature from the governmental institutions is pre-earthquake gender policies and reports.

At the national level the Ministry of Women Development is the main apparatus coordinating, advocating and monitoring women’s issues. Documents prepared either by the ministry alone or in collaboration with governmental or other gender agencies, have been useful in drawing a picture of the government’s approach towards gender mainstreaming and empowerment. Among its policy documents, the National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women from 2002 strongly emphasises empowerment measures (UN CEDAW 2007). These are to be undertaken in social, economic and political fields (ibid). The document provides good insight into the ministry’s, and hence also the government’s, gender mainstreaming efforts and women’s empowerment measures. Additionally, with the intent of reforming its gender apparatus at all levels of government, the Ministry of Women Development launched a National Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP) in 2005 (GOP 2007b). Documents dealing with the GRAP are enlightening in terms of the ministry’s coordination of policies and
procedures with authorities at provincial and district level. One particular document describing GRAP objectives is the Introductory Statement for the presentation of the Pakistan CEDAW report. In addition to describing the GRAP initiative, the document also provides information on the government’s perceived achievements in terms of fulfilling its obligations to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Being a signatory state to the CEDAW treaty the Government of Pakistan is obliged to report to the CEDAW Committee (UN 2003). The Introductory Statement and other documents dealing with the Pakistan CEDAW report are creating a picture of the situation of women in Pakistan in addition to revealing the government’s viewpoint on gender equality and empowerment. Hence, such reports are informative on several levels.

In terms of exploring the government’s actions and point of view on gender and earthquake reconstruction, reports and analyses published by the government’s Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) have been useful. ERRA was established by the Government of Pakistan shortly after the earthquake with the coordinating, facilitating and policy providing mandate (ERRA 2006b). Most of the reports have been compiled and edited by ERRA consultants and team members. Contributions have also derived from ERRAs subdivisions at provincial and district levels. The Provincial Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency (PERRA) was established in NWFP to execute ERRAs strategies at the province level (ERRA 2006b). Similarly District Reconstruction Units (DRUs) were established at district level to coordinate and facilitate the completion of reconstruction and rehabilitation projects in the districts (ibid).

3.3.3 Local non-governmental organisations

Reports, strategies and overviews of intentions provided by various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are among the main sources of information employed in this thesis. Distinctions have been made between local, national and international NGOs. For the tripartite categorisation of the main sources of information the international NGOs fall under the international institutions category. Here, national and local NGOs working for gender equality and improved status of women in the society are the core contributors. These organisations will be referred to as local NGOs for simplification purposes. Although some are anchored at the national level, their relevance to this thesis is their contributions locally in the earthquake affected areas. Literature stemming from this category is difficult to quantify.

23
compared to the contributions from international and governmental institutions. There are fewer reports available. Additionally, some of the reports are found via the NGO’s funding agencies or other cooperative partners and hence is more intricate to detect. However, the reports stemming from the agencies themselves have constituted the main sources of information in this category. These are reports presenting the organisations’ reconstructional efforts and shorter accounts from their own internet resources describing their efforts in the earthquake aftermath. From this category, 10 earthquake reconstructional accounts have been analysed, in which five are fact sheets from the organisations and the remaining five are reports describing reconstructional efforts and visions. Additional literature from this category has been studied with the aim of gaining an understanding of their conceptual perceptions of gender issues; hence some reports and accounts are from the pre-earthquake situation.

Most of the information made use of in this category stem from the five chosen NGOs working with gender issues in the earthquake affected areas; the Aurat Foundation, the Sarhad Rural Support Program, Khwendo Kor, the Sungi Development Foundation and Shirkat Gah. The organisations are selected for their breadth of coverage in women’s development and gender issues, their participatory and capacity building approaches and for their active focus on gender. Prior to the earthquake the organisations were all firmly anchored in the communities of the earthquake affected areas. Considering the knowledge of traditions and culture acquired by the organisations, their preferred approaches in terms of advocating for women’s empowerment are of particular interest. From each organisation visions, projects, programmes, evaluations, lists of cooperative partners, lists of funding agencies etc has been derived. The literature examined tend to be more action and implementation oriented than the other two categories of information sources. This is true for their efforts in earthquake reconstruction as well in which reports can be found on the achievements of the organisations. Though a few occasional analytical documents from the organisations have been found, such documents are to a lesser extent published or at least uploaded to their internet resources. Nevertheless, the centre point for information search has been the organisation’s own internet resources in addition to analyses and reports found through funding agencies and other cooperative partners. It seems to be a trend that these nationally or locally based organisations are contributing to impact analyses initiated and funded by international or regional research institutions. These are particularly valuable documents as they illustrate culturally sensitive viewpoints. The remaining part of this chapter will provide an introduction to the five organisations and their development and gender approaches.

24
Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation (Aurat Foundation) was established in 1986 as a non-profit, non-governmental civil society organisation (Aurat Foundation 2008a). Aurat Foundation has a national outreach with local partners in all of the 104 districts of Pakistan. The organisation is committed to work for empowerment of women and local level governance. Over the years Aurat Foundation has developed a collaborative relationship with several departments of the Government of Pakistan in addition to civil society organisations and communities. The Aurat Foundation has gained recognition nationally and internationally for its efforts in enhancing women’s economic and political status (ibid). Aurat Foundation has developed an over-arching programme in its work; “strengthening civil society for women’s participation in governance in Pakistan” of which information, capacity building and advocacy are the major areas for intervention (Aurat Foundation 2008b). Considering the breadth of outreach, the organisation took a coordinating and networking role in the earthquake aftermath (Shirkat Gah 2005). With its anchorage in the Kashmir area and pre-earthquake established local citizens’ committees, the organisation’s response was coordinated from that area (ibid).

Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP) is a non-profit, non-governmental civil society organisation working to mobilise the communities of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) to participate in shaping their development (SRSP 2008a). SRSP’s work is founded upon the idea of help to self-help; if given the right resources and conditions people are capable of helping themselves. The organisation emphasises the importance of including all stakeholders to a project in order to ensure ownership and dedication for the work. Hence, social mobilisation is at the heart of the organisation. One of the main sections of SRSP’s programmes is the social sector and gender issues (SS&Gi). Gender and education are at the top of the agenda. Additionally, SRSP have programmes in microfinance, human resource development, physical infrastructure and water & sanitation, enterprise development and earthquake relief and rehabilitation (ibid).

Ever since its establishment in 1989, SRSP has been working in what was to become the earthquake affected area. Once the earthquake hit SRSP initiated relief operations in three affected districts of NWFP; Abbottabad, Mansehra and Battagram (SRSP 2008d). The organisation continued its work in the earthquake affected area after the initial relief aid operations ceased. During the transitional period between relief and reconstruction, SRSP
provided tents for shelter and schooling purposes among other things. In the reconstructional phase work in housing subsidy and reconstruction, recovery of livelihood sources, health, water & sanitation and education are among ongoing projects (ibid).

Khwendo Kor Women and Children Development Programme (Khwendo Kor) was established in 1993 as a non-profit, non-governmental civil society organisation engaged in development efforts for women and children (Khwendo Kor 2008; SRSP/IUCN N.d). Khwendo Kor bases its work on participatory development thinking and needs driven processes. Khwendo Kor facilitates communities to become catalysts for their own change and development. Khwendo Kor works for the improvement of women’s situation in five districts of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP); Dir, FR Bannu, Karak, Peshawar and Abbottabad. Main programme areas of Khwendo Kor are community based female education, primary health care, women micro enterprise development and advocacy and networking. Education is a major component within Khwendo Kor’s program of women empowerment (ibid).

Khwendo Kor contributed in earthquake relief immediately after the October 2005 disaster (FROK 2005). The organisation continuously undertook needs assessments to evaluate how it could best be of use to the communities (ibid). A major contribution in earthquake reconstruction has been the rebuilding of school buildings in addition to the advocating of girls’ enrolment in schools. Promoting girls’ schooling also entails advocating against the removal of girls in times when they are needed elsewhere (Oxfam Novib 2008a).

Sungi Development Foundation (Sungi) is a non-profit, non-governmental civil society organisation working in four districts of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), all of which are located in Hazara division (Sungi 2008; Oxfam Novib 2008b; UN ESCAP 2008). The organisation additionally has an advocacy unit of which is working in all of the countries’ provinces. Sungi was established in 1989. Today there are 152 paid staff working for the organisation. Sungi has developed an effective approach for facilitating people’s own participation in community development. In particular the organisation combines advocacy work with more operational rural development programmes to enable policy, institutional and grass root changes. Core programmes are sustainable livelihood, governance and democratisation, disaster management and social sector development with emphasis on
education and health. The advocacy programme promotes gender equality, particularly women’s participation in decision making and girls’ education (ibid).

Being one of the largest NGOs and having experience in natural disaster relief work in the areas affected by the October 2005 earthquake, Sungi assumed a leading role in both information sharing and in direct relief aid (Sungi 2005). The government, NGOs and the affected people themselves all sought the services of Sungi. Having worked in the earthquake affected area (EQAA) for a long time prior to the earthquake, Sungi had developed a sense of mutual trustworthiness with the targeted villages, something of which eased the process of assessing their expressed needs. Hence, Sungi had first-hand access to the affected communities (ibid). Sungi ended its relief work April 2006 and the developed rehabilitation and reconstruction plan became the new framework for the organisation’s work in the EQAA (Sungi 2006). Sungi also has a disaster management program (Sungi 2008). The focus is on awareness raising and skills appropriation among the people of the disaster prone areas, in order to promote disaster resilience and preparedness. The disaster management programme is active in supporting the affected communities in rebuilding their lives in terms of physical, economic and social assets. Sungi works with the communities advocating for the participation of women and girls, they emphasise the importance of providing women and girls with development opportunities. In particular they advocate for women’s education being of importance for overall societal development (ibid).

Shirkat Gah was established in 1975 and is a human rights-based organisation specialised in women’s development (Shirkat Gah 2008b; Shirkat Gah 2008a). Shirkat Gah attempts to bring about attitudinal change and knowledge as this is believed to contribute to empowerment. Based on its field work experience Shirkat Gah believes that local cultural practice is impeding women’s empowerment, hence advocacy is among its main activities. Training in gender awareness and analysis and legal awareness is provided from the Women Resource Centre. Empowerment of women through legal awareness is among the core issues. The organisation has about 80 staff members divided by three offices in the country (ibid). When the earthquake hit, the organisation rearranged its work in other parts of the country to concentrate on the earthquake affected areas (Shirkat Gah 2006). The organisation’s gender focus was translated into its relief and reconstruction efforts. During the relief phase, Shirkat Gah was addressing women’s particular needs directly in terms of practical needs in the relief camps and indirectly in terms of advocating for relief and reconstructional women’s
considerations through its networks. In the reconstruction phase, the long term repercussions from the earthquake have been addressed, particularly in terms of facilitating supportive women’s groups and also in terms of psychosocial support.

A more thorough discussion of various reconstructional efforts undertaken by the organisations will be presented in chapter five. In the following chapter, the post-earthquake institutional and policy context will be presented.
4 Post-earthquake institutional and policy context

It seems to be an acknowledged fact in literature covering various natural disasters and their aftermath that women and men experience disasters differently (Mehta 2007). Based on lessons learned from previous disasters in the region, like the earthquake in Gujarat, India and the Indian Ocean tsunami, women often bear a disproportionate burden in terms of disaster impact (UNDP 2006). The aim of this chapter is to create a picture of the institutional post-earthquake gender situation in Pakistan. Hence, this chapter will look into the policies and programs created after the Pakistani earthquake, with particular emphasis on the gendered policies. With the federal government being the main provider of reconstruction policies, the main focus for this institutional and policy context will lie with the reconstructional organisation and the policy development of the government.

4.1 Earthquake recovery policies

The establishment of the Federal Relief Commission on 10th October 2005 is briefly mentioned in chapter two as the first institutional arrangement by the government (ERRA 2006b). Mobilising resources and coordinating rescue and relief activities were among the Commission’s main tasks. A number of stakeholders and assessments informed the government in its development of policies and strategies for the relief and recovery. The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team (UNDAC) assisted in disaster impact assessments as well as in coordinating the many stakeholders providing international response (ibid). The assessments undertaken by the UNDAC and a damage and loss assessment spearheaded by the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank informed the government in its development of recovery policies (UN 2005). Additionally, lessons learned from previous earthquakes in Afghanistan and Gujarat, India have informed the policies developed (ERRA 2006a). Recovery lessons from the Indian Ocean Tsunami have also been considered (ADB/WB 2005).

The planning for the longer term earthquake reconstruction began quickly after the rescue and relief had been actuated (ERRA 2006b; GOP 2006). The onset began with the already mentioned establishment by the Government of Pakistan of the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) on 24th October 2005. It was given the mandate of planning, implementing and monitoring the comprehensive response to the devastations of the
earthquake. ERRA is a part of the Prime Minister’s Secretariat with headquarters in Islamabad. Its organisational structure follows a two tiered institutional structure with the ERRA Council and the ERRA Board for which are responsible for policy and administration and for the implementation respectively. Within each program sector Core Groups have been established to engage in coordination among the stakeholders. There are also General Groups undertaking coordinating and information sharing activities. According to ERRA’s “Annual Review 2005 to 2006” there are all in all 80 national and international NGOs, 8 UN agencies, 5 multilateral and 15 bilateral corporations and government departments of which ERRA deals with both at the planning and implementing levels. Hence, a strong institutional coordination system is required. Further, ERRA’s decentralised system has a three tiered organisational structure where the governments of NWFP and AJK have established branches of ERRA at the provincial levels, referred to as PERRA (Provincial Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency) and SERRA (State Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency) respectively. At district level the District Reconstruction Units (DRUs) have been established to coordinate reconstructional efforts in the districts and to report back to their respective governments of which in turn will report back to ERRA (ibid).

*Figure 4-1: Organisational chart ERRA*

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8 The chart reflects the organisational linkages of the environmental sector (ERRA 2006d). Here, the environmental sector chart is used to provide an illustration of the organisational structure of ERRA with its Core Groups and the decentralised agencies of PERRA/SERRA and DRUs in addition to the provincial Environmental Protection Agencies (EPAs).
Despite the lacking institutional system for an effective response to the earthquake, the government quickly developed a framework for the various phases of relief and recovery (ERRA 2006b). Within the defined phases, ERRA appointed certain strategies and priorities to guide the actions of the numerous actors involved. The main focus strategies of the reconstructional phases will be briefly outlined in the following sections. Throughout the initial relief phase crisis management and damage and needs assessments were on the agenda. For the rescue and relief operations, the primary focus was saving lives and particularly avoiding the feared “second wave” of deaths as the cold winter was approaching in the affected areas. Hence, provision of winterised tents was a top priority throughout the relief phase (ibid). The main policy document throughout the relief phase was the “Early Recovery Framework” of the UN system in Pakistan (UN 2005). The framework was developed by the various bodies constituting the UN system in Pakistan, their international partners and NGOs. This UN framework is based on a set of international principles promoting sustainable, equitable and rights-based development. In particular the framework is guided by conventions to which the Government of Pakistan is committed; the Universal Declarations of Human Rights, the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Millennium Declaration. The purpose of the framework is to be a resource to the government in its planning of the national strategy for reconstruction and rehabilitation and thus provide information and support (ibid).

The emergency relief phase ended after six months (ERRA 2006b). ERRA established a Transitional Relief Cell (TRC) to handle the transition from relief to reconstruction and to coordinate the remaining relief activities needed after the closure of the relief phase. Among the expressed priority activities in the transitional period, ERRA stressed the importance of making provisional school and health facilities available to the affected people. As another major policy in the transitional period was the return of the affected people living in camps, ERRA recommended school and health facilities to be built in temporary shelters in the communities. An overarching principle in the setting up of temporary school buildings was the idea of bringing back a degree of normality to the lives of the affected people, particularly the children (ibid).

Replacing the transitional phase is the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase of which is still proceeding (ERRA 2006b). In compliance with international post-disaster principles of
translating the disaster setting into a “window of opportunity”\(^9\) the government launched its “Build Back Better” strategy for the reconstruction. According to ERRA (2006b: iii) the “Build Back Better” strategy includes “physical infrastructure, size and scope of activities; and the quality of services to the people”. In addition to reconstructing safer public buildings and houses, the underlying idea is to convert the calamity into an opportunity for positive changes in terms of societal structure and functioning. ERRA has published “Build Back Better” strategies for a number of reconstructional sectors, such as rural housing and livelihood. These are intended to guide the reconstructional efforts of the many stakeholders in the earthquake affected areas (ibid).

In order to facilitate and coordinate the transition from relief to reconstruction, ERRA in collaboration with the UN system developed an Early Recovery Plan (ERP) (ERRA/UN 2006). Firstly it was intended for the activities of the first 12 months of the reconstruction phase, and was later extended due to the perceived continued need for such a policy framework (ERRA 2006b). Activities are identified in eight reconstructional sectors (ERRA/UN 2006). In addition to the eight reconstructional sectors there are three cross-cutting issues to be considered in policy development and project implementation. The issues of social and economic rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability are meant to be mainstreamed into all interventions (ibid).

### 4.2 Gender specific recovery

Among the institutional frameworks securing vulnerable groups in the aftermath of a disaster are the guiding principles for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the international conventions ratified by the Pakistan Government (IRIN 2006). These are providing guidelines of governments’ obligations. The IDP guidelines however do not inflict the same legal commitment as the international human rights conventions. Pakistan has not ratified the two main conventions promoting universal human rights; the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. However, as mentioned the CEDAW treaty and the CRC has been ratified. In cases of emergency where relief and recovery efforts are planned and implemented, treaties like the CEDAW are intended to

\(^9\) Window of opportunity refers to the idea of utilizing the aftermath of a disaster to bring about an improved situation compared to the pre-disaster conditions (IRIN 2006; IFRC 2006). It can be in terms of bringing the poor out of poverty, empowering women etc (ibid).
protect the citizens from the potential misconducts of the governments. For women in the earthquake affected areas of NWFP and AJK, CEDAW is supposed to guarantee equal rights in access to health and credit schemes like earthquake compensation and equal treatment in terms of post-earthquake resettlement, land reforms etc (ibid).

In the early relief and recovery policies and frameworks, gender considerations are included either as a priority issue or as a cross-cutting issue (UN 2005; ERRA/UN 2006). The UN “Early Recovery Framework” emphasises the importance of gender equality from a human rights based position. Gender issues are seen in compliance with vulnerable groups’ issues and are thus included among the main priorities. In the joint ERRA/UN “Early Recovery Plan” gender is identified as a cross-cutting issue along with environmental sustainability and economic and social rights (ibid).

Further on, for the more long term reconstruction and rehabilitation ERRA has developed a separate “Gender Policy for Earthquake Affected Areas”, as of June 2007 (ERRA 2007a). With the new social structure after the earthquake, women are in need of various economic and social opportunities not accessible for them prior to the earthquake. The change in responsibilities of women and men as a consequence of the altered gender roles in the earthquake aftermath requires the reconstruction efforts to be relevant to their new needs and priorities. The aim of the gender policy is to encourage the incorporation of gender issues in the reconstruction. The policy goal is “to ensure that sectoral strategies, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation take into account gender considerations thereby increasing the likelihood that the benefits of reconstruction and rehabilitation accrue to women, men, girls and boys, as well as to members of vulnerable groups” (ibid: 2). Hence among the strategies, the main approach is capacity building in terms of gender considerations within the ERA system (ERRA 2007a). The gender policy itself intends to create awareness on the importance of gender disaggregated data and provides tools in gendered impact assessments. The reconstructional sectors focused upon in the policy are education, health, livelihood, social protection and water supply and sanitation. For every sector the policy provides analytical frameworks as well as suggestions for interventions and activities. These strategies proposed in the gender policy seem to be in line with the prevailing gender thinking in Pakistan. Throughout the policy, gender equality can be extracted as the guiding principle for a gendered reconstruction. Gender mainstreaming, women’s needs fulfilment and
empowerment are approaches mentioned for interventions (ibid). The theoretical background for these approaches will be outlined in the following sub-chapter.

In order to institutionalise gender issues within ERRA and in its policies and programmes, gender units have been established (ERRA 2007a). At the central level, a Gender Team is operating while there are gender coordinators working at provincial and district levels. Additionally, among the Core Groups mentioned in the above description of ERRA’s organisational structure a Gender Core Group has been established for the coordination of gender matters. In addition to ERRA bodies, various implementing partners, organisations, departments and ministries dealing with gender issues, among them the Ministry of Women’s Development, NGOs, UN bodies like UNDP and UNIFEM are members of the Gender Core Group. Information exchange on good practices, needs assessments and policy updates in addition to identifying gender gaps at policy and implementing levels of the reconstruction are among core objectives of the group. The institutionalisation of gender in the ERRA system is illustrated in the figure below. The figure is developed from ERRA’s organisational chart (ERRA N.d.) and ERRA’s environmental structure chart (ERRA 2006d).

**Figure 4-2: Gender specific organisational chart**

Sources: ERRA 2006d: iv and ERRA N.d.
4.3 Earthquake recovery policies and gender theory

Gender equality is the main principle among the gender commitments in Pakistan. It is commonly described to be achieved through two approaches; gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment measures (UNDP 2003). Whereas gender mainstreaming are overall approaches aiming at increasing the gender equality of a society, empowerment initiatives on the other hand are targeted interventions towards improving disadvantageous conditions faced by women (UN 2002). Rather than being competing approaches these are described to be complementary (ibid). If gender is mainstreamed into policies and projects it will also be a natural ingredient in various assessments (UNDP 2003). Hence, if gender assessments have determined the need for specific interventions towards women in order to gain gender equality, empowerment might be the approach undertaken (ibid). For the remainder of this chapter, gender theory relevant to the gendered post-earthquake context will be described. Firstly however, the gender concept will be defined.

The World Bank explains that: “gender refers to socially constructed roles and socially learned behaviours and expectations associated with females and males. Women and men are different biologically but all cultures interpret and elaborate these innate biological differences into a set of social expectations about what behaviours and activities are appropriate, and what rights, resources, and power they possess” (King and Mason 2001: 2). In this respect gender roles are the expected behaviours attached to being a woman or a man. These roles and expectations may be considerably different across various societies (ibid).

4.3.1 Gender mainstreaming in ERRA Gender Policy

It is stated in ERRA’s “Gender Policy for Earthquake Affected Areas” that the policy builds on existing gender equality commitments (ERRA 2007a). The ERRA policy should be seen in relation to the gender mainstreaming strategy of which presently constitutes the dominant women’s development discourse in Pakistan. The “National Gender Reform Action Plan” (GRAP) is the most recent document aiming to coordinate gender mainstreaming in various sectors of the Pakistani society (GOP 2007a). The focus on women’s development and gender in Pakistan is a controversial issue facing resistance as well as support (Ansari 2004). The Women Division was formed in 1979, due to the lack of a national policy for women (GOP 2008). Ten years later the division was elevated into a complete Ministry of Women’s Development (MoWD). The ministry was provided with the mandate of promoting gender
equality and women’s empowerment. In 1996, the year after the Beijing World Conference on Women, Pakistan signed the “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” (CEDAW) (ibid). The following years a number of reforms and readjustments in policy initiatives and in the legal framework have been undertaken in order to enhance gender considerations among decision making powers and hence fulfil the obligations manifested through CEDAW (GOP 2007a). Herein, the “National Plan of Action” was formed in 1998 pursuing the priority areas of concern in the CEDAW treaty. As a continuation the “National Policy for the Development and Empowerment of Women” was launched in 2002 (ibid). Thereafter, the “National Gender Reform Action Plan” (GRAP) was established in 2005 aiming at government-wide reforms in order to institutionalise gender issues at all levels of government (GOP 2008).

With the paradigm shift from WID to GAD\textsuperscript{10} within the gender and development thinking, the focus on specifically targeted interventions towards women shifted towards gender mainstreaming initiatives (UN 2002). In accordance with the underlying ideas in the shift from WID to GAD, this modification was also argued based on the concern that inequalities between men and women would not be resolved through targeted interventions towards women alone. The needs for broader perspectives and to address the relations between men and women were acknowledged. Hence, mainstreaming of gender issues into policies and actions of all spheres of societal development was believed to contribute to overall development. In particular gender mainstreaming was considered to contribute to an improved situation and status of women in the society (ibid).

Gender mainstreaming as the global strategy for promoting gender equality was established at the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (UN 2002). Notwithstanding, even before the Beijing Conference, attempts were constantly made at bringing gender issues to the centre of policy and programme considerations (ibid). Gender mainstreaming entails identifying gaps through studies providing gender disaggregated data and developing strategies to counter the gaps and inequalities (UNDP 2003).

\textsuperscript{10} The shift in policies from WID (Women in Development) to GAD (Gender and Development) in the development discourse characterises the transition from the WID focus on isolated women-specific projects to the focus on gender considerations and gender roles in the GAD approach (Razavi and Miller 1995).
Gender mainstreaming is defined by United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as:

“…the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality” (UN 2002: 1).

The idea is to ensure that gender issues are integrated into every aspect of the society and hence will be considered by politicians, bureaucrats and researchers as well as by the people working at the grassroots level (UN 2002). These ideas can be mirrored in ERRA’s “Gender Policy for Earthquake Affected Areas”. Among the principles listed is the aim of making gender considerations a natural and integral part of all of the work in ERRA (ERRA 2007a). According to the policy, capacity building within ERRA will be of grave importance (ibid). Hence, through gender mainstreaming gender equality becomes an integral issue, rather than a downgraded issue on the side (UN 2002). According to the definition provided by ECOSOC the definite goal is gender equality (ibid).

Definitions of gender equality tend to emphasise the importance of a gendered needs fulfilment, i.e. that needs and priorities of both men and women are considered when projects are planned and implemented (Hijab 2007). With the United Nations Development Programme gender equality is defined as:

“[t]he equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men” (Hijab 2007: 3).

Attempting to ensure that a variety of needs and interests are addressed, a distinction between strategic and practical gender needs has been made (Moser 1989). The strategic needs are referring to the nature of the relationship between men and women and are most often derived from analyses of the marginalisation of women vis-à-vis men. Measures identified to address the strategic gender needs are mainly dealing with discriminatory practices and establishing equality in rights in terms of labour, property, access to resources and political equality. Through its goals of increasing women’s sense of self-worth and their ability and possibility
to make life choices, empowerment is seen as a means of meeting strategic gender needs. The notion of empowerment will be further elaborated in the section below. Practical gender needs on the other hand are referring to the concrete conditions faced by women and are derived from their perceived needs at a certain given time. Although women’s practical needs usually arise from their marginalised position, the measures undertaken to overcome these needs are generally not challenging the subordination to men. Practical needs are met through income-earning activities and basic services provision (ibid).

4.3.2 Empowerment of women

In ERRA’s “Gender Policy for Earthquake Affected Areas” empowerment of women is explicitly mentioned as a means of bringing about gender equality (ERRA 2007a). The following section will outline the empowerment thinking within the development discourse.

Like gender mainstreaming, the empowerment concept has gradually gained recognition in development thinking (Oxaal and Baden 1997; Alsop et al. 2006; Moser 1989). The empowerment idea had a two pronged entry into the development field, starting from the second half of the 1980s. Within the development agencies in the western parts of the world, empowerment was brought in from the literature of social work, psychology and education, decades after it was first discussed in such fields. Simultaneously, in writings from women in developing countries, empowerment is seen as deriving from the grass-roots experience of women in organisations and unions rather than a western import. In spite of, or rather because of, its widespread popularity the term is defined differently among various stakeholders and might even hold several interpretations within the same organisation (ibid).

For the purpose of illustrating the variety in usage of the term empowerment a few selected definitions will be provided. Firstly ERRA describes empowerment as being “about people – both women and men – taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems, and developing self-reliance” in their “Gender Policy for Earthquake Affected Areas (ERRA 2007a: 10). The World Bank generally defines empowerment as “the process of enhancing an individual’s or group’s capacity to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” (Alsop et al. 2006: 1). The definition varies however among various research and development branches of the World Bank (ibid). The right to make choices in the 1995
Human Development Report on “Gender and Human Development”; “Development must be by people, not only for them. People must participate fully in the decisions and processes that shape their lives” (UNDP 1995). For many NGOs, such as Oxfam International, empowerment is about powerless people challenging oppression and inequality (Oxaal and Baden 1997). In a development setting empowerment has often been connected to the developmental terms of participation, democratisation, capacity building and economic improvement (Mosedale 2003).

According to the bibliography of women’s empowerment provided by Esplen et al. (2006) there seems to be a duplex division in conceptual understanding of the empowerment term. The authors have reviewed material covering various perspectives on women’s empowerment. On the one hand development agencies base their work on the idea that in addition to being a means to achieve other development objectives, empowerment is also a development goal of its own. The institutions upholding this understanding are rather critical to the more instrumental understanding of empowerment of which is the second major direction within the empowerment tradition. In this respect empowerment is viewed through measurable outcomes (ibid). The main instrumental argument for empowerment seems to be that there is a relationship between empowerment and positive achievements in development outcomes such as poverty alleviation and economic growth (Alsop et al. 2006).

Despite the vast amount of varying definitions, certain points of resemblance can in fact be detected in the literature on empowerment (Mosedale 2003). The empowerment term has particularly been used with reference to women. In any country women as a group enjoy less power relative to men. Hence development agencies seem united in their endeavours for the disempowered people, either women or any other group in the society experiencing powerlessness. Secondly, there seems to be agreement on the fact that the developing agencies can only contribute in facilitating the people’s empowerment and can not in fact perform the actual empowering process. Empowerment must be claimed by the people themselves (ibid). This recognition is evident in ERRA’s gender policy in which the role of various agencies is identified as supporting processes building women’s capacity and self-reliance (ERRA 2007a). The policy emphasises that the actual empowering process can only be actuated by women themselves (ibid). Further, the importance of people gaining power over their own situation and that they are enabled to make choices and important decisions in their lives is a third factor seemingly agreed upon in various definitions of empowerment.
Women’s empowerment is perceived to be actuated through the fulfilment of both practical and strategic needs through nutritious meals, health care, education and safety combined with the broader access to social, economic and political equity (Lopez-Claros and Zahi di 2005). The idea is that women then will be able to utilize their rights and opportunities and will have better chances at controlling their lives (ibid).

With the introduction of empowerment, discussions of power dimensions acquired a more profound position in the development field (Mosedale 2003). A brief introduction to various understandings of power will be provided in the following.

Power operates in several dimensions (Mosedale 2003). The dimension first detected and analysed in social sciences was the power over dimension. Robert Dahl defined power over in the early 1950s as a situation where “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (Dahl 1957 quoted in Mosedale 2003: 4). Following this, researchers became concerned with the process of legitimising the relationship between the ones in power and the powerless (Oxaal and Baden 1997; Mosedale 2003). Hence, the process of enforcing ones wishes upon others, despite the will of the other party became a factor for analysis. A second aspect of the power concept is the power to dimension. With this power a person increases its possibilities to what is achievable, however not necessarily by tightening another party’s opportunities. Thirdly, power within relates to self awareness and self confidence. People experiencing oppression might have developed low self esteem and internalised feelings of worthlessness. Consequently, the obvious power over dimension is not needed to gain and maintain power over the oppressed. In the last power dimension people with a common purpose organise based on the recognition that a group working together is stronger than an individual alone. Power with is characterised by collective action. In terms of empowerment of women all four power dimensions are relevant for women to gain empowerment and to make life-choices of their own (ibid).

In addition to the different dimensions in which power operates, power analysis can be executed on various societal levels (Oxaal and Baden 1997; Mosedale 2003). Power operates differently at institutional, community, household and individual levels. Additionally, power structures within and among different groups in the society might be strongly influential in terms of an individual’s perceived freedom to act. Being a woman, and hence a member of the
collective “women” category, might in itself have strong implications for that particular woman’s possibilities within her societal context (ibid). This is particularly evident when looking at the religious and cultural conservative conditions under which women in the earthquake affected areas live. The following chapter will explore efforts at addressing gender issues in the post-earthquake recovery. It will illuminate how and whether the policies accounted for in this chapter can be translated into the practice in the earthquake affected areas.
5 Post-earthquake gender initiatives

Combined with the previous, the following chapter will draw a picture of the earthquake reconstruction in Pakistan in relation to gender issues. Gender equal relief and recovery is a stated goal in international disaster management literature (Yonder et al. 2005). Throughout this thesis the attention has been drawn to gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women as important development strategies in achieving gender equality. Accordingly, the following chapter will look into their level of signification in the earthquake reconstruction.

As mentioned, men and women experience disasters differently (Garcia 2007). Like any disaster, the impacts of the Pakistani earthquake were gender-specific (Shirkat Gah 2006). Considering the lower status in general of women in the Pakistani society, as elaborated in chapter two, women’s vulnerability to disasters are disproportionately higher than men’s. When the Pakistani earthquake hit, the society was affected according to the pre-existing social structures and inequalities, hence women were hit particularly hard (ibid; IRIN 2006).

In chapter two it is pointed out that the relief phase had an insufficient focus on gender issues (UNDP 2006). This is a position taken by a number of non-governmental agencies, both international and local (UNDP 2006; Sayeed 2006; Sungi 2006). Nonetheless, gender considerations have been undertaken in quite a few initiatives, albeit the overall picture seems different. The degree to which the hitherto reconstruction phase can be characterised as gendered will be explored through an analysis of the initiatives undertaken to address gender issues in the reconstruction phase. Firstly, a few gendered initiatives in the relief phase will be outlined briefly, in order to balance the above picture of gender and relief.

5.1 Gendered relief efforts

Few accounts have been made about specific gendered relief initiatives. Based on the accounts given in the few reports referring to the issue, the most plausible reason for this simply seems to be that gender to a minimum extent was addressed in the immediate relief response (UNDP 2006). Initiatives specifically targeting women in the relief phase will be outlined in this sub-chapter.
According to Shirkat Gah, a women’s rights organisation, specific gender considerations in the initial relief phase are concerning the challenges women and men face when staying in relief camps (Shirkat Gah 2006). The organisation states that the most pressing issue of women in camps was insecurity in terms of their future due to loss of livelihood and in terms of violence and sexual abuse in the camps. Most of these issues remained unaddressed throughout the relief phase however (ibid).

Shirkat Gah was among the organisations focusing on women’s development that responded to the earthquake immediately (Shirkat Gah 2006). The organisation organised a “Rapid Needs Assessment of Women Survivors” through gathering teams from other gender or women-based organisations. Among these were Sungi Development Foundation and Khwendo Kor of which are both included in the third category of information sources for this thesis. The teams underwent training in assessing gender-based risks and vulnerabilities before conducting assessments in temporary settlements in two of the hardest hit districts of AJK and NWFP. According to the assessment, the pre-earthquake gender-specific structure was amplified in the camp reality as the women could not move around freely and hence was dependent upon male family members to access relief goods etc. Additionally, the assessment emphasised the health and hygiene needs of women as being insufficiently addressed. Taking the assessment into account in addition to learning from a few camps being responsive to women’s needs, Shirkat Gah started advocating for “safe spaces” for women in camps in which they could feel a certain level of security. In collaboration with Sungi Development Foundation among others, a “safe spaces” project was set off in the earthquake affected areas. Additionally, attempting to fill an experienced gap, Shirkat Gah distributed women specific relief goods to various camps such as sanitary and hygiene kits for pregnant women in particular, and for women and children additionally (ibid).

Based on accounts provided from Sarhad Rural Support Program’s (SRSP) relief efforts, gender seem to be an underlying factor of concern in most activities. A few examples to illustrate their gendered thinking in the relief phase will be provided here. The organisation set up a team of women staff with the directive to visit camps regularly (SRSP 2008c). The aim was to ensure that gender needs were not ignored during the relief work. The team particularly looked into women’s needs while living in the camps (ibid). Eventually the team’s work became more institutionalised and a gender monitoring cell was established (SRSP 2008d). The cell was provided the same tasks of examining whether gender needs were
adequately addressed, though its reach was expanded from camps to visiting different districts of the earthquake affected area. After the relief phase was declared over, the gender monitoring cell continued its work operating in reconstructional projects (ibid). Further on SRSP addressed women’s needs and interests in health related issues in the relief phase (SRSP 2008c). In particular, SRSP endeavoured to address women’s needs in relation to water and sanitation and maternal health (ibid).

5.2 Gendered reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts

Recall that gender equality is described to be achieved through both gender mainstreaming approaches and empowerment of women (UNDP 2003). In this section, reconstruction efforts containing elements of gender and women’s issues will be accounted for.

5.2.1 Reconstructional gender efforts

The main preoccupation in most reports incorporating gender considerations is gender inequality in the reconstruction (IRIN 2006, Shirkat Gah 2006). In general it is reported that women have less access to relief and compensation compared to men (ibid). Hence, for the most part the reconstructional rhetoric on gender asserts the importance of changing the inequalities. Critical voices from human rights-based organisations for example state that the policies and their impacts seem to reinforce rather than challenge the inequalities between men and women (Sayeed 2006). The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) provides an illustrative example through its discussion on the compensation practices (ibid). The process of providing compensation has received criticism on several counts (IRIN 2006). There have been complaints about lacking transparency, corruption and discrimination in the payments (ibid). In terms of gender issues the discriminatory feature of the compensation is of relevance to this thesis. APWLD are among the reporting agencies claiming that the policies on compensation were discriminatory against women (Sayeed 2006). Firstly, the aid was to be provided based on people’s national identity cards (NIC). Due to cultural norms, NICs were mostly possessed by men. Hence, many women did not have NICs when the earthquake hit, something of which led to the women facing difficulties in accessing the aid provided. Secondly, the customs in terms of inheritance is mentioned as an additional constraint to women’s access to compensation. In case of the death of a family member, compensation was provided for the household to which the deceased had been a
part. The preference to male family members was however widespread. In many cases of a parents’ death elderly brothers would claim the compensatory package even though they did no longer live under the same household (ibid). An additional concern in terms of women’s access to compensation is the cultural practices (IRIN 2006). Women’s mobility is strongly restricted through the customs of purdah, something of which has created physical difficulties in claiming and cashing in the payments. Compensation became yet another factor to which the women depend on their male family members (ibid). Hence, based on objectives of gender equality it might seem that the compensational policies and practices have failed in benefiting men and women equally. According to UNDP (2006) it is not easily understood whether the policy and interventions on compensation included gender sensitive considerations.

According to the women-based organisation, Shirkat Gah, women who had lost their male family members were particularly in need of protection in the early stages of the reconstruction phase (Shirkat Gah 2006). A number of NGOs as well as the government and its partner organisations set up shelters for women in which they could stay (ibid; Sayeed 2006). Specific shelters accommodating widowed women were also set up (ibid). In the shelters women’s practical needs of food, clothing, protection and shelter are provided for (IRIN 2006). Additionally, some shelters also offer vocational training and awareness-raising activities (ibid; Shirkat Gah 2006).

In addition to the practical difficulties in the post-earthquake situation, women might also be in need of emotional recovery initiatives. In their report “Rising from the Rubble” Shirkat Gah (2006) states that women face challenges in their mental and emotional health as a result of the earthquake’s drastic alteration of their lives. In addition to practical recovery needs, the need for psychological support is emphasised. Based on experience from previous disasters such as the earthquake in Gujarat, India and the Indian Ocean tsunami psychosocial support has been introduces. A lesson learned is that traditional mental health counselling is not sought by the people in the communities. The idea is that social activities and interventions in groups will bring about mental relief. Psychosocial interventions in terms of forming social groups began in camps, shelters and the like early in the reconstruc tional phase. Awareness-raising groups and skills-appropriating groups are among the more long term reconstruction and development efforts. In the most remote and conservative areas, organising women is a grave challenge. Women are in fact prevented, by the cultural and religious practices from participating in activities in the communities (ibid). Hence, in the most conservative areas the
strong purdah system seems to prevent the earthquake recovery of women. There are however accounts of initiatives working for the psychosocial recovery of women without challenging the existing patterns of gender roles (Fida 2006). Please refer to sub-chapter 5.3.1 for an illustration of a culturally sensitive approach.

5.2.2 Gender mainstreaming efforts

To understand gender mainstreaming in relation to the reconstruction an outline of the pre-earthquake status is needed. The “National Gender Reform Action Plan” (GRAP) is described in chapter four as the most recent pre-earthquake gender policy. GRAP was launched in May 2005 (UN CEDAW 2007). Implementing the country’s gender equality commitments is the stated purpose of GRAP (GOP 2007a). Mainstreaming gender is mentioned as an important tool in achieving gender equality through aligning policies, structures and procedures of various stakeholders (ibid). In addition to preparing policies and programmes, attempts at institutionalising gender in the government are also mentioned in chapter four. The establishment of a separate Ministry of Women’s Development (MoWD) in 1989 might be seen as the main act contributing to the institutionalisation of gender (GOP 2008). The ministry has developed five main initiatives; social and economic empowerment, legal empowerment, engendering governance structures, awareness creating through media campaigns and finally conducting of workshops (ibid). Additionally, the Local Government Ordinance from 2001 has mandated a 33 percent quota system for women in local government, something of which has in fact substantially increased the political participation of women (WB 2005). This is believed to contribute to women’s and gender issues becoming a greater part of the political considerations locally. Although grave gender inequalities persist, gender seems to be taken into account at an increasing rate (ibid). Hereof it is inviting to draw the conclusion that gender is not yet mainstreamed in the Pakistani society, but is however increasingly gaining recognition and consideration.

To consider the degree to which gender has been mainstreamed in the earthquake reconstruction and rehabilitation, an investigation of the various reconstructional policies and programmes is needed. In most earthquake reports that are somehow relating to gender mainstreaming, most of the emphasis is put on how gender considerations can be improved rather than giving accounts of hitherto efforts undertaken. Recall that a successful gender mainstreaming entails an integration of gender considerations in all forms of planning and
decision making as well as in implementation and monitoring (UN 2002). Based on this statement, the small number of reports dealing with direct gender mainstreaming initiatives in reconstruction is not surprising. If mainstreamed, mainstreaming in itself becomes less of an issue and reports from the reconstruction would accordingly account for the actual efforts undertaken to address gender. Yet it has already been mentioned that gender is not fully mainstreamed into the various spheres of the Pakistani society. This seems to apply for the reconstruction process as well, as there are few reporting agencies claiming to have a gendered focus on all of their reconstructional activities. With the exception of ERRA’s “Gender Policy for Earthquake Affected Areas” there are few statements provided as to how gender is to be mainstreamed into the various organisations’ structures. One way of interpreting this is that hitherto direct gendered actions are few, but still the reporting agencies are aware of their importance.

All the three categories of agencies; international, governmental and non-governmental organisations are emphasising the importance of gender mainstreaming in a post-disaster setting. The level of priority and its perceived role in the reconstruction process however varies among the agencies. According to the category of various UN agencies and other international development organisations, the idea of mainstreaming gender considerations into assessments, policies and actions is equally important in a post-disaster setting (UNFPA 2006, UNDP 2006, Oxfam International 2005). Identifying gaps through gender disaggregated data is an important part of analysing the post-disaster situation they argue (ibid). In a gender report conducted by ERRA in July 2007 efforts at mainstreaming gender is mentioned as important factors needed to be strengthened if a gender equal recovery is to be achieved (ERRA 2007b). The report seems to correspond well with ERRA’s gender policy as both emphasise the importance of translating awareness of gender issues into practice. The launching of the gender policy and the establishment of gender coordinators at PERRA and SERRA levels is in itself an indication of a certain level of commitment as to mainstreaming gender (ibid). Critical voices however, point at the lacking capacity of handling gender issues among the institutional structures established immediately after the earthquake (UNDP 2006). In particular this applies to the Federal Relief Commission (FRC). This has resulted in minimum consideration for the impact of interventions on gender roles and relations. An explanation provided for the lacking gender concern is that FRC as well as ERRA were new organisations, established shortly after the earthquake and hence did not have linkages with the existing institutional structures in the country (ibid). As already mentioned the existing
gender policy in the country, the “Gender Reform Action Plan” was itself fairly new when the earthquake hit, having been established only five months prior to the earthquake. This could be a contributing factor the poor link between reconstructional structures and the gendered ones.

The category of non-governmental organisations working locally in the earthquake affected areas, differ the most in terms of how they relate to gender mainstreaming. The five organisations constituting the main sources from this category were all chosen based on their gendered focus. They seem to be focusing more on the practical part of mainstreaming gender compared to the former two categories. Gender seems to be integrated to a greater extent into all parts of their work in contrast particularly to the governmental agencies where gender among the majority of departments and agencies mostly is seen as a peripheral issue. Among the governmental agencies gender is seen as a cross-cutting issue (GOP 2008). The risk of cross-cutting issues becoming “no ones responsibility” is a contested and debated issue and will be returned to in chapter six (UNDP 2003).

Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP) and Sungi Development Foundation (Sungi) constitute the main resources on gender mainstreaming among the local NGO sources. Through gender awareness training from international partners, such as Oxfam Novib\textsuperscript{11}, SRSP has incorporated gender considerations into its organisational structure (SRSP 2008b). Additionally, SRSP has a separate gender program addressing gender issues (ibid). According to Sungi’s reports, the organisation is among the pioneer organisations in terms of mainstreaming gender into its development work (Sungi 2005). Like SRSP, Sungi has undertaken efforts within the organisation in order to enhance the gender awareness in all of its sections. Among the efforts is the establishment of a centre for strengthening the gender sensitive working environment in the organisation centrally as well as with its community partners (ibid). As with the other NGOs in the third category of information sources, gender seems to be mainstreamed to a larger degree into all of their reconstructional efforts. This is evident from their reports as they are more focused on actual initiatives and achievements than on explaining the importance of gender mainstreaming. This is in compliance with the

\textsuperscript{11} Oxfam Novib is an affiliate of Oxfam International based in the Netherlands (Oxfam International 2006b). It is an independent organisation collaborating with the Oxfam International and other affiliates in development projects and emergency aid (ibid).
above statement that when mainstreamed, the gendered accounts relate more to actual efforts than to the act of mainstreaming itself.

5.2.3 Women’s empowerment

As already mentioned, the idea of empowerment in development derives from the women in developing countries challenging the existing power structures themselves and from development agencies attempting to copy the empowerment successes in social work and psychology of the western world (Moser 1989). In disaster reconstruction settings, empowerment initiatives often involve organising people in groups in which they can jointly claim their needs (Yonder et al. 2005). Examples from Gujarat, India are illustrative. After the massive earthquake in 2001 NGOs organised groups for local women to enable their participation in the relief and reconstruction. Awareness-raising and skills appropriation were important factors facilitated (ibid). The same approaches have been called for in the aftermath of the Pakistani earthquake (IRIN 2006).

In the most conservative parts of the earthquake affected areas direct empowerment initiatives seems to be few, based on reports available on the issue, i.e. few initiatives are claimed to have empowerment as their primary objective. One of the main reasons for this might be the idea that empowerment of women to a large degree contravene the existing local customs. This is emphasised further by Shirkat Gah working in the area with their “Women Law and Status Programme” (Shirkat Gah 2008). According to the organisation the “major obstacle to women’s empowerment is local customs and practices that deny them rights to which they are entitled under state laws” (ibid). This corresponds well with one branch within the empowerment thinking stating that empowerment does in fact contain a certain degree of competition over power (Razavi and Miller 1995). Empowering women entails altering the existing patterns of gender roles in a society. If women are to gain power or increase their chances of decision making, this would consequently entail that the more powerful, men in particular, must relinquish some of their influence (ibid). In fact conflicts often occur when women challenge their subordination (Moser 1989). Judging by the number of statements referring to the strictly conservative social structure in parts of the earthquake affected areas this seems like a plausible explanation for the limited empowerment initiatives in the area.
As of June 2007 empowerment has been institutionalised as a strategy in the recovery of women (ERRA 2007a). In its “Gender Policy for Earthquake Affected Areas” ERRA states that social and economic empowerment of women are important features in achieving gender equality (ibid). Empowerment however was an applied approach prior to the earthquake in some of the earthquake affected areas (Shirkat Gah 2008). The organisations addressing women’s empowerment have mainly been engaged in organising women’s groups for purposes varying from participation in social and economic activities to local political actions (Shirkat Gah 2008). Core objectives within these groups are awareness-raising in issues regarding state provisions and support mechanisms in order for the women to be more informed about their entitlements (ibid). Likewise, in the earthquake recovery local gender-based organisations, like Shirkat Gah continue the awareness-raising activities and initiatives advocating for participation (Shirkat Gah 2006). The issues in which they attempt to create awareness however are somewhat altered as a result of the earthquake. This can be illustrated through the entitlements to land as an issue emerging in the earthquake aftermath (IRIN 2006). Reports are stating that women, who lost their husbands or male relatives in the earthquake, are in fact loosing their properties due to poor information and lacking documentation of their properties. Legal assistance is not easily accessed and, due to the lack of state subsidies it is often too costly (ibid). Hence these are a few of the issues attempted addressed by women and gender-based organisations in the earthquake aftermath (Shirkat Gah 2006).

As already established, direct empowerment interventions are few in numbers. Notwithstanding, several recovery projects have had empowering effects (UNDP 2006). Employment opportunities are among the features indirectly causing empowerment. As international and local NGOs started expanding their projects and programmes for reconstructional purposes and thus were in need of new staff members, a vast number of employment opportunities opened, some of which also accrued to women. To a certain degree the participation of women was restricted by cultural practices. There were however job opportunities created that were culturally tolerable for the women to obtain. In particular women were employed as schoolteachers or within the health care sector (ibid).

New gender roles have emerged after the earthquake as a result of the altered household pattern. It has already been mentioned that the number of female headed households in the earthquake affected areas has increased after the earthquake (ERRA 2007a). A common
interpretation of this development is that the women are increasingly burdened in their everyday life as new responsibilities are added to their chores (UNDP 2006). On the other hand, the altered household pattern could in turn entail increased participation in decision making and thus have an empowering effect. An example from a pre-earthquake phenomenon in AJK might illustrate this point (UNDP 2006). Over 3-4 decades a number of men have migrated from the province for job opportunities. A vast impact from the migration has been detected on the gender roles in the communities, where men and women have broken out of the stereotyped roles. Women have become more active in managing their social and economic situation as well as participating more in decision making processes (ibid). One can only speculate as to whether a similar phenomenon might occur in the post-earthquake context of NWFP. The province is appointed as the most conservative part of the country and the relationship between men and women is characterised by traditional gender roles (UNDP 2006). Compared to women’s situation in AJK, women’s level of participation and decision making in NWFP is limited. Considering that the empowerment effect on AJK women from the male migration evolved over a period of 3-4 decades, a similar experience in NWFP will require a lengthy timeframe (ibid).

The fact that women are compelled to undertake new non-traditional roles after the earthquake might lead them one step closer to their empowerment. This is applicable only if the cultural leaders allow it and the women do not perceive it merely as a burden. If considered an opportunity for improving women’s access to resources and services, the new roles might actually have a positive impact on women’s lives. All of the five organisations identified as main NGO sources in this thesis, Sungi, SRSP, Khwendo Kor, Shirkat Gah and Aurat Foundation were involved in women targeted development activities prior to the earthquake (Sungi 2005; SRSP 2008b; Oxfam Novib 2008; Shirkat Gah 2008; Aurat Foundation 2008). Presumably they will resume to these activities once the focus of the earthquake reconstruction converts into a longer term development focus. This already seems to apply for their reconstructional approach as gendered considerations have been maintained in the earthquake aftermath. According to Oxfam Novib (2008), one of the supporting agencies to Khwendo Kor, the understanding that the status of women will be improved by their active contribution to the household income is manifested in the work of Khwendo Kor (ibid). Hence, if continuing its pre-earthquake approach, initiatives strengthening the new roles and responsibilities and their impact on women’s lives might take place.
In accordance with the altered gender roles between men and women, new roles and responsibilities are also experienced by young girls and boys (ERRA 2007a). Several agencies state the concern that girls and boys might drop out of school as a result of their new responsibilities. Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP) reports several incidences of girls failing to return to school after the earthquake (SRSP 2008e). ERRA states that a reason for girls dropping out of the school system is poverty among affected families (ERRA 2007a). The trend among poor families, even prior to the earthquake was to prioritise boys’ education. An additional explanation, also pointed out by ERRA, is that the responsibilities for activities within the household usually are accrued to girls; hence they may drop out from school if needed in the household (ibid). According to Khwendo Kor, an organisation engaged in development efforts for women and children in NWFP, education is a central factor in empowering girls and women (SRSP/IUCN N.d.i). Accordingly, knowledge is an important tool in decision making and in expressing ones needs and concerns. Hence in the long run the earthquake repercussions in terms of constraining girls’ education might impede girls’ development and empowerment processes.

Reconstruction of school buildings has been highly prioritised among all the categories of agencies; international, governmental and local non-governamental organisations (UNESCO 2006; ERRA 2006c; SRSP 2008e). The degree to which the school reconstruction is incorporating gendered issues depends on the agency in question. For the Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP) conducting gendered assessments with relation to education was a natural part of their post-earthquake impact assessments (SRSP 2008e). The assessments indicated that within certain areas there were no government schools for girls and even boys had long travelling distances. SRSP was engaged in the earthquake affected communities prior to the earthquake advocating for the importance of children’s education, particularly education for girls. According to the organisation itself, once the reconstruction of school buildings commenced, there was considerable willingness within the communities to participate in the reconstruction and even donate land to which the school was to be built. The communities thus seem to have adopted an awareness of the importance of children’s education (ibid). As above mentioned a number of stakeholders have been actively involved in the reconstruction of school buildings. In view of the fact that organisations like SRSP and Khwendo Kor have assumed certain elements of gender considerations into the reconstruction, one might argue that educational recovery thus represents another group of
projects indirectly causing empowerment. This applies only if the reconstruction actually succeeds in bringing girls and boys back to school after the earthquake.

5.2.4 Relation between policy and action

The degree to which the reconstructional interventions of various agencies reflect the established recovery policies depends on whether looking at the overall recovery or the gendered policies and efforts. In reports and accounts provided form various agencies on reconstructional efforts it seems that reconstruction in general follows the principles of the governmental ERRA strategies. This particularly applies to physical and technical reconstruction efforts. With the examples from the educational sector above for instance, it seems that the international agencies relate their reconstruction to the national policies. The rebuilding of schools and health units etc performed by the local NGOs also relate to the national policies in terms of technical guidelines for the reconstruction. Detecting a relation between the more gendered policies and actions however has proven to be more complicated. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, gender and women’s development efforts that are in fact undertaken in the reconstruction phase are mostly undertaken by agencies working with gender prior to the earthquake. Hence, gender is therefore a natural part of their reconstructional considerations. This applies to international organisations, UN bodies like UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO as well as Shirkat Gah and other local gender based organisations. Their justifications for gendered approaches in the earthquake aftermath are fewer due to their pre-earthquake established framework of which gender considerations already are part. The commonly stated reason for undertaking gender assessments and interventions in the earthquake reconstruction is the already mentioned fact that disasters affect men and women differently (Shirkat Gah 2006; UNDP 2006; IFRC 2006). Furthermore, the reasoning thus seems to be that recovery initiatives must reflect these differences and ensure that the benefits accrue equally to men and women (ibid). Nonetheless, the objective of gender equality is a developmental idea – easily stated in writing, however facing grave adversity in practice. This seems to be the experience of the gendered reconstruction attempts outlined above. Challenges in addressing gender issues in the earthquake affected areas will be further elaborated in the sub-chapter below.

Secondly, ERRA’s “Gender Policy for Affected Areas” of which is stated to be the main gender and reconstruction framework was launched June 2007, nearly one and a half years
after the initial relief phase was declared over (ERRA 2007a). The belated policies emphasising women’s rights and needs, caused grave difficulties for women in exercising their entitled relief goods (IRIN 2006). Considering the late gender policy, what appears to be the organisations’ lack of attention to gender policies, might merely be a result of belated policy issuance. It seems that the gender-based organisations continued along the pre-earthquake path in terms of considering gender issues as a part of their reconstructional projects. Judging by their reports, they as a matter of fact addressed gender issues regardless of the reconstructional gendered policy context. Thirdly, the literature available on gender policies on the one hand and on gendered interventions on the other is in itself causing difficulties in terms of exploring the relationship between gendered policies and actions. In general there seems to be few agencies reporting that they relate their interventions to the institutionalised policies.

5.3 Cultural considerations in earthquake recovery

Finally, before looking into the categorised agencies themselves and their perceptions about gender in reconstruction, this section will outline some of the challenges facing gender advocating agencies in Pakistan.

In the conservative context of the earthquake affected areas, there are above all grave cultural barriers to the development work in general and the earthquake reconstructional work specifically. The categories of development agencies and non-governmental organisations, both international and local report that they are facing difficulties in relating to certain communities in the earthquake affected areas. Similar accounts on behalf of the governmental agencies have not been discovered. The reason for this is most likely that NGOs and other non-state actors are largely involved in the implementation in the field (WB 2005). Some districts in the earthquake affected areas are particularly conservative in social structure (UNDP 2006). As pointed out in chapter two, women in NWFP are facing grave limitations on their mobility and possibility to partake in decisions affecting their lives. Organisations working for women’s rights and women’s development meet strong resistance to their efforts (Aurat Foundation 2004). The vastly cultural and religious conservatism seems to have transformed into extremism in certain areas (Ansari 2004). Reports have been made of NGOs operating in the areas being under attack from local extremists. In particular this applies to organisations signalising support to women’s and girls’ development. Organisations working
for the development and empowerment of women as well as organisations of which have women staff have experienced attacks in the areas. An illustrative example from 2001 is the incident where a bomb exploded in one of Khwendo Kor’s offices in the remote conservative areas. Khwendo Kor is known in the region for its efforts on education for women in remote areas. Although no one was hurt in the explosion at Khwendo Kor’s office, there are reports of injuries in similar attacks elsewhere in the region (ibid). Plan International suffered the killing of three staff members in its Mansehra office in NWFP February this year (PI 2008). Additionally the office was burnt to the ground (ibid). The individuals and organisations attacked have all resumed their efforts despite the uncertainty of the future (Ansari 2004). The attacks are illustrating the outermost degree of unpopularity organisations working for women’s development and empowerment are facing.

The above mentioned attacks and the previously mentioned difficulties experienced by the Red Cross Red Crescent Society in providing psychosocial support to women in strongly conservative communities illustrate the challenging task of addressing women’s development in the most conservative areas. Dealing with these challenges might take various forms. Several organisations demonstrate cultural sensitivity in their work to gain greater acceptance among the conservative forces of the communities (Fida 2006). Cultural sensitivity is also emphasised by ERRA in its “Gender Policy for Earthquake Affected Areas” (ERRA 2007a). The policy recommends implementing agencies to consider the part of the earthquake affected area in which they are implementing projects. While it might be feasible to address gender issues directly in some areas, a more gradual approach might be needed in other areas. Moreover the policy recommends that the strategy for the most conservative areas might be to put aside the jargon and invite men, including community elders and religious leaders to participate in the work (ibid). In correspondence with the ERRA policy, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) long before the earthquake incorporated culturally sensitive approaches to their work (Fida 2006). Despite the vast challenges caused by the religious and cultural conservatism, IFRC and PRCS are in fact achieving progress in their relation with the local leaders in NWFP. According to Mubashir Fida reporting for IFRC, the continuation of IFRC and PRCS activities are welcomed in the earthquake aftermath. The reason put forward for their acceptance in the area is their culturally sensitive approach respecting the local customs “even if they appear to be contrary to more “Western” norms. (...) It’s a fine balance effectively implementing relief and recovery programmes while not contravening local
customs and religious norms” (ibid: 2;3). The approach undertaken is forming committees of people from the community, including influential village elders and religious leaders. Further the committees provide culturally and religiously acceptable advice on how to proceed with the work (ibid). In ERRA’s gender policy the importance of achieving trust and support from the community elders and religious leaders for the implementation of reconstructional programmes is emphasised (ERRA 2007a). To illustrate its point ERRA uses the support IFRC and PRCS have gained in the conservative communities through their collaboration with the community leaders (ibid).

In addition to the challenges of working in strictly conservative societies, many international organisations are met with scepticism (Fida 2006). In the initial relief phase the remote communities were generally welcoming towards the international humanitarian organisations. As mentioned in chapter two however, an emerging scepticism towards their influence and presence in the area has occurred. The western organisations’ development approaches are accused of being “contrary to culture and morality” (ibid: 2).

It has become evident throughout this chapter that addressing gender issues in Pakistan is not an easy task, let alone in the conservative earthquake affected areas. In some cases gender has become a security issue, particularly in the rural communities where women’s participation and empowerment is not culturally accepted. The goal of gender equality is a timely process severely touching upon the prevailing truths of a society (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi 2005). Due to the degree of conservativeness in the societies however, some agencies suggest undertaking practical interventions to improve the position of women rather than directly seeking to change the gender relations (SRSP/IUCN N.d.2). Some forces within the Pakistani society on the other hand are advocating for increased women’s empowerment through an alteration of the conservative customary practices. Among these are APWLD, the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, claiming that “[t]he first critical step in bringing about any meaningful change is a long-term sustained anti-patriarchy campaign which would eliminate the root cause of patriarchal elitist policies discriminating against women” (Sayeed 2006: 39).
6 Perceptions of gender and reconstruction

From the previous chapter it seems that local gender and women-based NGOs are the agencies most likely to include gender considerations in the implementation of post-earthquake projects. This chapter will explore whether the perceptions on gender and reconstruction held by various agencies are in fact determining the degree to which they incorporate gender considerations into their recovery projects. As mentioned introductory, an idea originating from the cognitive science is that the perceptions and actions of human beings are interlinked (Hurley 1998). The idea is widely acknowledged in the social sciences stating that our actions are shaped to a large degree by our perceptions and experiences and vice versa (ibid). Towards the end of the chapter, the implications of the agencies’ perceptions will be discussed.

6.1 Gender perceptions among stakeholders

There is no uniform view on women and their role in the society; it varies over time and across cultures and communities (Moore 1988). According to the World Bank there is no country in the developing world in which women enjoy the same legal, social and economic rights as men (King and Mason 2001). The views on women as a subordinated group among most stakeholders in the earthquake reconstruction should be seen in this context. Although the subordination of women is a uniform perception, the degree to which women are victimised, considered vulnerable or self-reliant varies. Accordingly the projects and programmes set out in the earthquake aftermath also vary in terms of content and outcome. The views the affected people hold themselves are also influential in shaping their recovery (Shirkat Gah 2006). Victimisation may be a result of many stakeholders’ views on women as vulnerable, something of which might affect the recovery projects intended for them. Additionally, women might focus on their roles as victims themselves and thus allow the helplessness to take position. For development and reconstruction projects to succeed, women’s own perceptions are essential as are the perceptions of the stakeholders working with the reconstruction. Some organisations, such as Shirkat Gah point at the importance of self-reliance and empowerment thinking for the women’s recovery (ibid).
The perceptions held on gender and women’s development in relation to reconstruction may be influenced by their understanding of the gender concept. The degree to which it is perceived to be of importance seems to vary among the agencies. Reports from both the relief and the reconstruction phase are presenting rather critical views on this matter. They claim to have detected an attitude where gender is seen as a luxury concern to be addressed after the more important and urgent matters have been attended to (IFRC 2006; Sayeed 2006; Shirkat Gah 2006). It is stated that this seems to be a continuation of pre-earthquake perceptions where gender concerns and women’s issues have been treated as “add-ons”, i.e. as additional issues not fully incorporated (ibid). According to the Asia Pacific Forum of Women, Law and Development “[t]he underlying messages were clear: this is no time to be so focused on women” (Sayeed 2006: 4).

A common understanding of gender is that it is a cross-cutting issue (UNDP 2003). This applies for a number of international development organisations as well as for the governmental agencies, as mentioned in chapter five. The idea behind cross-cutting issues is that these are issues interlinked with all other sectors of the society and hence should be mainstreamed into the operational structure of the sectors (UNDP 2003). It is often described to be all sectors’ responsibility to include considerations of the cross-cutting issues, such as gender, environment etc into their policies and programmes. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is critically stating that the practice of “making gender a cross-cutting issue renders it institutionally homeless” (UNDP 2003: 7). Due to the fact that gender is considered to be everybody’s responsibility, it can therefore easily turn into nobody’s responsibility (ibid). In line with the view of gender as a cross-cutting issue in pre-earthquake gender mainstreaming thinking, gender is also identified as a cross-cutting issue in the earthquake reconstruction (GOP 2008; UNDP 2006).

Below the perceptions of various stakeholders in the reconstruction will be examined. The post-earthquake literature from the reporting agencies can be divided into two categories, the ones directly addressing gender considerations and the ones where gender issues are included as an additional aspect to the reconstruction. The perceptions presented will be based on detected trends in the literature and are not exclusive. It shows variations in understandings and perspectives among some of the stakeholders in the earthquake reconstruction. An
analysis of underlying ideas and perceptions might contribute to greater insight in terms of the reasons for the stakeholders’ choice of certain policies and projects.

6.1.1 International institutions

The international agencies are the institutions among the three categories providing the most theoretical material. This corresponds well with their role as providers of best practices, knowledge, trainings and recommendations. Additionally, providing funding and undertaking assessments in addition to physical reconstructional efforts are also a part of many of the international organisations’ contributions.

As a general rule gender considerations are advocated for in most of the organisations’ post-earthquake literature. However, compared to the local women-based NGOs, there are few organisations among the international that seem to have incorporated gender concerns into every aspect of their reconstructional endeavours. Rather, the contributions from this category are separate reports and briefings on gender and women’s issues in the post-earthquake context. To a varying degree these reports state the importance of gender issues being a part of the relief and reconstructional considerations from the very beginning. In its 2006 “World Disaster Report” the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies state that gender-based inequalities will be reinforced in disasters if women’s needs and contributions are ignored immediately after a disaster (IFRC 2006). IFRC presents lessons learned from the Indian Ocean tsunami to illustrate the empowering effect reconstructional participation may have on women (ibid). Among the reporting agencies from the United Nations system, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), particularly its Pakistan division stands out as a main contributor to the post-earthquake literature. Based on the available reports it seems UNDP perceive gender as an important part of any reconstructional aspect (UNDP 2006). Like most of the reporting international agencies, UNDP is referring to the importance of gender analyses in order to achieve women’s development. It is argued that gender disaggregated data would contribute to altered approaches towards men and women in development – more gendered approaches. UNDP points at the pre-earthquake dominant approach as only targeting men due to the perception that men are heads of households and thus they are needy of the development benefits. In this context women were addressed merely as housewives and second earners (ibid).
One of the major roles of international institutions, in addition to responding to the crisis itself, is informing the governmental agencies on topics perceived to be pressing. A number of international agencies have provided technical support to the government of Pakistan and ERRA in particular on reconstructational issues of education (UNESCO, UNICEF), health (UNFPA), livelihood (WFP, IUCN) etc. According to their reports, gender seems to be an issue mentioned within the other reconstructional sectors, rather than a separate matter of its own. Gender issues seem to be perceived important in relation to achieving gender equal reconstructional outcomes, in terms of enrolment of boys and girls in school for instance (UNESCO 2006). Some organisations, like the Pakistan division of IUCN have initiated separate women’s assessments in the post-earthquake setting (IUCN/Khwendo Kor 2006). In one case IUCN Pakistan collaborated with the women’s organisation Khwendo Kor, in undertaking the assessment (ibid). Initiatives like these illustrate the commitment to gender and women’s development in the international agencies present in the earthquake affected areas.

6.1.2 Governmental institutions

Based on the reports, briefings and policies from the governmental agencies, it seems this is the category of information sources where gender thinking is the least incorporated. Despite the attempts at institutionalising gender issues in terms of policies and establishment of governmental agencies, it is still argued that gender has a weak institutional anchorage in the country (UNDP 2006). Gender is seen as a cross-cutting issue, something of which is emphasised by the Ministry of Women’s Development (MoWD) itself stating that gender is the responsibility of the government as a whole and not the responsibility of the MoWD alone (GOP 2008). In the earthquake reconstruction context, MoWD was initially not given any role (UNDP 2006). The Ministry of Social Welfare is the body at federal level assigned with the coordination of the recovery of women, children and disabled. Nevertheless, it is argued that with the mandate of empowering women, MoWD should have a more central role in the reconstruction than advocating for gender mainstreaming among other agencies (ibid). The downgraded position of MoWD might be seen as a part of the gender perception held by the government. In this case it may seem like the government perceives gender issues and women’s empowerment to be less significant in the reconstruction.
In relation to the situation of women in Pakistan, a government published gender mainstreaming report states that in the world “[t]here is no country in which the outcomes of public policy are equal for men and women” (GOP 2007a: 5). Considering the reports from the earthquake affected areas on the weak institutional gender authority and inadequate expertise within the reconstructional agencies, the above statement might function as a respite of gendered interventions. Here, it is important to note however, that this interpretation is a result of the impression created from available reports and hence might be biased in terms of my own perceptions of gendered reconstructional efforts in Pakistan. Nevertheless, the tendency in the governmental perception of gender in the earthquake reconstruction seems to be that it has a lower priority compared to other issues.

As pointed out in chapter five, the ERRA “Gender Policy for Earthquake Affected Areas” was not issued until June 2007. Considering that the importance of gender considerations is frequently mentioned in the literature, even in previous ERRA strategies, one might argue that the launching of the gender policy was somewhat late. This might be interpreted towards a lower priority given to gender considerations compared to other ERRA strategies. This is in compliance with the above discussed perception about gender being less important and might signalise that ERRA too perceive gender issues to be second-rate. Although unintentional such a signal might influence the perceptions held of gender and reconstruction among other stakeholders. In a report from July 2007, nearly two years after the earthquake, ERRA points at the importance of creating a common understanding of gender among policy makers, project designers and implementers in order to achieve gender equality (ERRA 2007b). This is an interesting statement considering the earthquake reconstruction in July 2007 had been in process since March 2006; more than one year. Hence this seems to confirm the findings from some of the earthquake reports stating the incoherent and inadequate gender understanding in the government’s disaster relief and reconstruction agencies (UNDP 2006). One might also argue that despite the late recognition of the importance of a common understanding, building such an understanding is all the same important.

The policies created and the interventions undertaken by the governmental agencies seem to reflect their perceptions of gender issues in reconstruction. The seemingly most widespread perspective among these agencies is that gender remains a cross-cutting issue addressed at the perceived appropriate time. Gender does not seem to be a pressing issue in disaster relief and recovery.
6.1.3 Local non-governmental organisations

The literature from the local NGOs are somewhat different than from the other two categories of information sources. In contrast to the international organisations providing best practices, lessons learned and general topic specific articles, the literature from the local NGOs are context bound to the earthquake affected areas. There are fewer available reports and there is a difference in the way gender is incorporated. The focus of the post-earthquake reports and information notes seem to correspond well with their pre-earthquake literature of which was focusing on gender and women’s development. The organisations were chosen as information sources based on their gendered focus. The degree to which women’s development is the primary goal in the initiatives, vary among the organisations. Notwithstanding gender seems to be an integral part of their reconstructional interventions, regardless of the reconstructional sector in focus.

In addition to advocating for gender considerations in their earthquake reports, the local NGOs are also presenting their direct gendered interventions in the accounts provided from the reconstructional phase. It seems they are attempting to base their services and interventions on the needs of women and other vulnerable groups and hence they seek equity in the rehabilitation process (Sungi 2006; Shirkat Gah 2006). A local NGO, Shirkat Gah critically points at physical reconstruction representing the dominant belief in terms of successful recovery and rehabilitation (Shirkat Gah 2006). From the organisation’s point of view this is a rather technical position and will presumably not help women and vulnerable groups recover sufficiently. On the other hand the organisation emphasises the importance of avoiding a victim-perspective on women, as this might reinforce the patriarchal structure of the society and hence form the policies in the same direction. Furthermore, it is also advocated for avoidance of the perception of women as mere recipients in development and reconstruction. Shirkat Gah point to the failure in top down approaches to consider contextual needs of the women in the area of intervention. Based on the accounts of its own interventions it seems they perceive women’s participation is an important factor in bringing about development and earthquake recovery (ibid).

6.1.4 Stakeholders’ perceptions

The above discussion seems to be in line with the thinking in cognitive science of how our perceptions and actions are interlinked (Hurley 1998). Judging by all the organisations’
earthquake reports there seems to be congruity between their perceptions of gender and women’s issues and their actions in the earthquake reconstruction. From the above discussion the various contributions among the stakeholders can be extracted. With the risk of stereotyping, their main contributions will be briefly outlined in the following. The main function of the international agencies seems to be to provide best practices, training and to advocate for the best practices towards other stakeholders. The government’s main function seems to be to provide the institutional environment for the reconstruction in terms of policies and agencies. Local and cultural knowledge and anchorage is the major function of the NGO category. Knowing that this is a simplification and an unfair description in relation to other tasks and functions held by the agencies, it is still a detected trend. If utilized in a constructive and appropriate manner these functions might actually improve the logistical, cultural and cooperative difficulties experienced during the relief and recovery. The real picture is not this simplistic however. A collaboration of the above kind would for instance require universal perceptions of matters to prioritise. It has become evident from the discussion in this chapter that the stakeholders are far from a universal understanding in terms of gender and reconstruction. Nevertheless, there are signs of equality in the reporting agencies’ accounts. Particularly this is true for establishing the importance of gender considerations in their reconstructional reports. The level to which the importance is ranked differ substantially however. Findings from a fieldwork conducted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the earthquake affected areas seem to correspond well with the understanding gained throughout this thesis. It suggests that it is more likely for the two categories of local NGOs and international institutions to incorporate gender considerations in their reconstructional efforts, compared to governmental agencies (ibid).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provides a perspective on the overall understanding of gender in the earthquake recovery. It is important to bear in mind that this is not a balanced view; however it is merely the view of UNDP based on findings from a conducted field study in the earthquake affected areas. It is previously mentioned that UNDP perceives gender equality to be poorly understood in the earthquake recovery (UNDP 2006). The view is general and applies to the various stakeholders in the recovery. At the federal level it is claimed that the gender institutional system is lacking authority in addition to being poorly coordinated. Furthermore the disaster management agencies themselves, the Federal Relief Commission (FRC), ERRA and PERRA/SERRA, were from the beginning poorly equipped in terms of gender awareness, something of which contributed to lacking reliable
gender disaggregated data. The last factor contributing to a poor understanding of gender in the overall recovery is the lacking policies facilitating training and increased gender awareness among stakeholders (ibid). Although biased and uncompromising this categorisation nevertheless serves its purpose. Firstly, it provides viewpoints as to why gender issues are not adequately addressed throughout the earthquake recovery. Secondly, it outlines some of the challenges facing gender advocating agencies in the earthquake aftermath. Advocating for gender considerations to be incorporated to a greater extent in the earthquake recovery seems to be needed.

6.2 Reconstructional perceptions – “Build Back Better” strategy

As mentioned in chapter four, the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) established a “Build Back Better” strategy to guide the reconstructional interventions (ERRA 2006b). Sectors to which “Build Back Better” strategies have been developed are rural housing, livelihood and education among others (ibid). In numerous reconstruction documents the strategy has been linked to the post-disaster principle of utilizing the “window of opportunity” that is offered in the aftermath of a disaster. ERRA itself states the intention of the strategy goes beyond the physical reconstruction and includes improved quality in services offered to the people (ERRA 2006b).

The “window of opportunity” idea is described by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) through an ancient Chinese saying: “crisis brings two elements: danger and opportunity. And wise people mitigate dangers by building on the opportunities the crisis brings and manage future risks in an anticipatory and pre-emptive manner” (IUCN 2006: 18). The importance of identifying and utilizing the opportunities arising from the earthquake is for the most part emphasised in the literature stemming from the category of international agencies. Among others, IUCN, Oxfam International and UNDP state that the earthquake has created opportunities in term of bringing about development beyond the pre-earthquake level (IUCN 2006; Oxfam International 2006c; UNDP 2006). In compliance with ERRA’s “Build Back Better” strategy, briefings and reports from the above mentioned organisations provide recommendations for reconstruction of various sectors, such as agriculture, livestock and livelihood as well as education, health and rural housing (ibid). Most post-earthquake literature from Oxfam International and UNDP, point to the additional opportunities in human development and social reconstruction. As in any post disaster context, Oxfam International
advocates that the post-earthquake reconstruction phase should be seen as an opportunity in terms of raising the affected people out of the pre-earthquake poverty (Oxfam International 2006c). UNDP adds that alteration of the stereotyped pre-existing gender roles and cultural and traditional barriers to the marginalised groups of society should be strived for in the post-earthquake period (UNDP 2006). According to assessments conducted by UNDP teams, referred to in the UNDP report “Gender mainstreaming in recovery phase – post earthquake Pakistan”, a full recognition of this opportunity to change the situation of the poor is lacking. Most emphasis is put on the physical reconstruction. This is in line with the view of the local NGO Shirkat Gah. As above mentioned the organisation characterises the governmental agencies’ dominant view in reconstruction as a belief in physical reconstruction to solve all the problems of the affected people (Shirkat Gah 2006).

Similar challenges to the ones faced by women as a result of the altered gender roles in the earthquake aftermath are also put forward in the post-tsunami literature (Prasad N.d.). In some cases among the women in the conservative parts of the Sri Lankan society, the tsunami recovery was in fact experienced as an opportunity in participation. The number of women-headed households increased, the women were subscribed to new responsibilities and they contributed more in decision making (ibid). It is important to note that this is not the only outcome for the Sri Lankan women, it is merely one example. However, this illustrates the importance of seizing the “window of opportunity” and thus bring about change.

The “window of opportunity” idea is not explicitly represented in literature from the local NGO category. Nevertheless, their reconstructional interventions might have the same effect. An example from reconstruction efforts in education illustrates this. In the pre-earthquake context, Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP) was working to supplement the governmental schools in the earthquake affected areas (SRSP/IUCN N.d.1). The primary aim has been to increase children’s enrolment in schools, particularly for girls. Hence, community-based schools are established in areas where girls do not have access to schooling and where boys must travel long distances to reach their schools (ibid). All the established SRSP schools were either destroyed or severely damaged in the earthquake (SRSP 2008e). In reconstructing the schools, SRSP has taken the separate needs of girls and boys into account in terms of separate toilet facilities and playgrounds fenced in for protection. The reconstruction of the schools illustrates the way in which the local NGOs, such as SRSP, are committed to building back better. The school buildings in themselves are improved as are also the conditions for the
children, particularly in terms of safety. The physical condition of the schools might in itself be an incentive for girls’ enrolment (ibid). The need to consider factors influencing the enrolment of girls and boys is also emphasised in ERRA’s gender policy (ERRA 2007a). ERRA states that to consider post-earthquake gender dynamics and socio-economic relations might serve as a “window of opportunity” in terms of achieving a more gender responsive educational system (ibid).

An additional interpretation of the “window of opportunity” is to utilize the situation the disaster provides to revise the development approaches undertaken (Shirkat Gah 2006). The disruption and abnormality caused by the earthquake might serve as an opportunity to change non-effective approaches. As mentioned above, Shirkat Gah uses this opportunity to advocate for altered and more participatory development approaches (ibid).

6.3 Implications of various standpoints

Chapter two presented the societal structure of the earthquake affected areas. Considering the socio-economic differences among the population of the area, their experience with the earthquake and the recovery will also vary. The cultural traditional norms of the society are the main factors directly influencing their experiences. Additionally the perceptions of the stakeholders are also influential, however more indirectly through the policies established and projects implemented. The relationship between policies and actions will also be studied in this section.

6.3.1 Impact of policies and actions

In light of the above discussion on perceptions of gender and women in reconstruction, awareness around various understandings when planning and implementing projects seems important. With the vast number of stakeholders in the earthquake affected areas, accordingly there are also a large amount of projects of varying kinds. It is to be expected that the perspectives and perceptions of gender and women’s issues are even more varied than what appears from the above discussion. A congruent understanding to which all projects and programmes will be based seems implausible. Hence, the outcome of the reconstructional projects will also vary. Based on the accounts of the earthquake recovery provided in this thesis, one might claim that the government’s approaches have followed the pre-earthquake
dominant understanding of gender relations. Particularly this is true for the policy and implementation of the compensation schemes as described in chapter five. These have for the most part followed the predominant patriarchal practice in the society (IRIN 2006). Hence, the outcome has disproportionately benefited men it is argued (ibid).

According to several agencies with a rights based approach to women, the provision of reconstruction aid along the pre-existing lines of gender inequality entails uneven distribution of recovery resources (Sayeed 2006). A universal voice among these agencies point out that such a gender neutral allocation of aid consequently results in discrimination as it reinforces the patriarchal societal structure. The policies and actions put forward might in themselves be discriminating as well as they may have discriminating effects caused by various cultural and traditional norms and practices. This applies for the early relief aid as well as the above mentioned compensation schemes, as the cultural practice in certain conservative parts of the earthquake affected areas have prevented women from accessing these goods directly (ibid). Discriminatory impacts of various policies and projects are not a post-earthquake phenomenon however. The Ministry of Women’s Development through the “National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women” is concerned that the women are discriminated and are restricted from full participation in the society as a result of the socially prescribed roles of men and women (GOP 2002). Congruent with women’s limited access to relief goods, their restricted mobility caused limitations in terms of access to services prior to the earthquake as well (ibid).

The chances of discriminatory impacts from policies and projects, demonstrate the importance of gender disaggregated data and gender analyses. The vast number of organisations present and their differentiated perspectives on the importance of gender issues requires clarity and commitment on behalf of the policy makers. In the post-earthquake reconstruction as well as in the development field as a whole, one might argue for the need of clear non-discriminatory frameworks and guidelines. To develop such a framework is in itself challenging, in terms of combining the various perspectives and views on how to best bring about development and recovery. Often in the process of developing policies, the perspectives underlying the existing policies are used as a basis in forming the new ones. If the system is open to and aware of the variety of perspectives and perceptions however, this might contribute to reconsiderations of the dominant view and policy practice and in turn have positive implications for the beneficiaries of the interventions chosen. Several agencies called for a change in the way of
thinking about gender and women’s development in relation to developing the post-earthquake policies (UNDP 2006). In line with the fact that the proportion of female headed households was largely increased, the pre-earthquake gender-neutral approaches were challenged (ibid).

6.3.2 The relationship between policy and action
The above discussed relationship between the perceptions held and actions undertaken by the government will be further illuminated in this section. The issue of accordance between commitments at the policy level and performances at the implementing level will be added to the discussion. Within the gender and development field in Pakistan, a common critique towards the government is its lacking conformity between the commitments agreed to in national and international forums and its actual performance (ADB 2000). Various organisations advocating gender issues and women’s development, from international development institutions to local NGOs point at the gap being too wide between commitment and reality (ibid). As above mentioned, the same picture seems to apply when looking at the government’s gendered conducts in the earthquake relief and recovery. With ERRA’s “Gender Policy for Earthquake Affected Areas” and a number of other policy documents stating the importance of gender concerns, the commitment certainly exists on paper. Critical voices however are questioning the actual implementation of the commitments (Sayeed 2006). Additionally, the identified discrepancy between the government’s policies and actions might be interpreted in the line of their above discussed perceptions. Are the policies issued necessarily reflecting the perceptions held? Suppose the perceptions held are not in accordance with prevailing discourses or international commitments ratified?

A consideration of additional commitments to the ones proposed by ERRA will further illuminate the government’s level of accordance between commitment and performance. The CEDAW treaty (Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) has been presented in previous chapters as the international treaty most relevant to gender issues (IRIN 2006). As mentioned Pakistan ratified the treaty in 1996, hence the government is obliged to follow the convention’s principles (GOP 2008; IRIN 2006). In May 2007 Pakistan presented its first report since the ratification of CEDAW to the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW 2007). According to the UN CEDAW Committee reporting on the issues presented, the most pressing challenges facing
Pakistan is to continue the efforts of implementing the Convention among all society actors, NGOs as well as government agencies. Numerous laws and policy statements developed with the aim of empowering and eliminating discrimination against women are listed in the report to CEDAW. A concern expressed in the Committee report is that changing laws and policy statements are not sufficient actions in dealing with gender issues, let alone will such actions alone ensure implementation throughout the country (ibid). One plausible reason for the gap between commitment and performance might be that the government’s perceptions are not in accordance with the policies issued. The government is however legally bound by international commitments to exercise certain obligations even if they differ from the government’s own political affiliation. The mechanisms in place for enforcing the international conventions are weak, something of which frequently results in ignorance according to the Human Rights Watch\textsuperscript{12} (IRIN 2006). Similarly, a concern expressed from the reporting CEDAW committee is that adopted national laws are not being executed throughout the provinces, an aspect that in fact reinforces the discrepancy between policies and actions (UN CEDAW 2007).

Based on the above discussion and the examination of reports dealing with reconstruction initiatives, gender initiatives in addition to reconstruction and gender initiatives, there seems to be a considerable gap between gender and reconstruction in the earthquake affected areas of Pakistan. Despite a few governmental policy documents declaring the importance of gender in reconstruction, the two features seem to be addressed as separate issues. Similarly, in resent governmental literature addressing gender and women’s issues the earthquake reconstruction is hardly mentioned. This applies to the previously mentioned Pakistan report from 2007 to the CEDAW committee (UN CEDAW 2007). Gender challenges in relation to the earthquake are not mentioned in the report.

\textsuperscript{12}The Human Rights Watch is an independent, nongovernmental organization, supported by contributions from private individuals and foundations worldwide (HRW 2008). The organisation is dedicated to protecting people’s human rights through investigating human rights violations and reporting on them (ibid).
7 Concluding remarks

Throughout the thesis, the actors’ cultural and organisational structure as well as the environment of which the organisations are a part, is argued to have an effect on their gender perceptions and undertaken actions. The main finding of this study shows that perceptions and understandings are in fact influential in determining how actors conceptualise and operationalise gender considerations in the reconstruction. This has become evident through an investigation of the actors’ reconstructional efforts and the perceptions underlying these efforts.

Concluding whether the earthquake reconstruction has been a gendered experience depends on the applied focus. With a view to the reconstruction as a whole gender is not the characterisation at heart. Before drawing such a conclusion it is however important to bear in mind the large number of actors responding to the earthquake and the accordingly vast variety in response provided. As pointed out throughout this thesis varying degrees of gender elements can be detected in a vast number of policies, programmes and projects. The agencies’ pre- and post-earthquake development frameworks seem to correspond in terms of a continuation of the way of thinking in pre-earthquake projects. Gender considerations undertaken in reconstruction thus seem to apply for the organisations being gender and women-based prior to the earthquake.

It is important to distinguish between reporting agencies’ perceptions of the earthquake response itself and their specific attitude towards the gendered nature of the relief and recovery. Throughout the thesis both views have been accounted for, albeit the degree to which their outcome is positively observed among the different stakeholders differs significantly. The emergency relief reaps immense recognition from a number of stakeholders for its effectiveness. Positions held on the extent to which gender considerations were sufficient in the relief efforts are ranging from gender being entirely absent to acknowledgments of certain small-scale attempts. For the most part however, gender is considered insufficiently addressed throughout the relief phase. When it comes to the reconstruction phase however, the picture is more complex. The time frame is different, something of which renders possible planning and policy making to a different degree than an urgent relief phase. One of the lessons learned from the devastating earthquake was the importance of preparedness as well as skilled and knowledgeable response bodies at all levels.
of government, community and village levels. With this recognition in mind and an institutional disaster response system in place after the earthquake, several reporting agencies express optimism for the response to future natural hazards. In addition to the time frame, the focus in the reconstructional phase is different from the relief phase’s focus, something that might also influence the extent to which gender considerations are addressed. As becomes evident throughout the thesis, the reconstructional policies have a more long term perspective compared to the urgent nature of the relief efforts. With time, the policies and projects changes and becomes more developmental in character. One might argue that this in turn pave way for gender considerations as a part of the development thinking.

Based on the presented efforts of addressing gender and women’s issues throughout the thesis, one gets the impression that such efforts are scattered, unorganised and based on the provider’s perception of its importance rather than a uniform idea. This corresponds with the ideas put forward in chapter six about the possibility of cross-cutting issues, like gender, becoming institutionally homeless (UNDP 2003). Being a cross-cutting issue, gender is the responsibility of the Government of Pakistan as a whole, and might thereby be given a lower priority. This is in turn dependent upon the perceived importance of gender considerations in reconstruction and development. Based on the discussion in chapter six and the efforts presented in chapter five, it is inviting to draw the conclusion that a correlation between the various stakeholders’ perceptions and their actions. This applies for all the three categories of information sources. Chapter six suggests that the local NGOs and the category of international institutions are more likely to include gender considerations in their planning and implementation of projects than the governmental agencies. With the risk of generalising, it seems both the reasoning and actions of these organisations are based on the perceived importance of incorporating gender and women’s considerations into the earthquake recovery process. Generalising even further, it seems the local NGOs to a larger degree have integrated women’s development and gender issues into their actual recovery interventions. The government seems to follow its international gender commitments on paper in terms of post-earthquake policies developed. The translation of the policies into practical approaches seems however slow and unsystematic. One reason for this might be the already suggested view among governmental agencies that gender and women’s issues are less significant compared to the physical reconstruction. Notwithstanding, it is important to be aware of the differences in commitment to gender and women’s development within the governmental system. In particular the gender devoted members at provincial and federal government levels are
advocating for increased gender and women’s empowerment thinking in the earthquake aftermath. A more thorough investigation of gender perceptions among stakeholders, particularly among the affected people themselves would be an interesting topic for further research. Learning about their own perceptions of post-earthquake gender and women’s empowerment in relation to their traditional and cultural practice would be interesting. From my own experience throughout the work with this thesis, the risk of western female researchers being biased and predetermined in their views on the conservative, cultural practices is high. Therefore a study of the perceptions of the people themselves would contribute to greater insight. Such a study might also inform policy makers and designers of development approaches in terms of the affected people’s needs. The links between perceptions and actions found in this thesis indicates the need for analyses conducted by external researchers that are not based with the implementing organisations. The hitherto majority of analyses from the Pakistan earthquake reconstruction are conducted by actors and stakeholders working in the area.

It has become evident throughout this thesis that gender and women’s issues often are disregarded due to low cultural acceptance. Pre- and post-earthquake episodes of violence, vandalism and threats towards women-based organisations have illustrated the unpopularity of gender and women’s issues in certain conservative areas. However, illustrated efforts have also shown willingness within communities to engage in reconstruction and development efforts that will benefit men and women, boys and girls if they are provided with knowledge and given a chance to participate. For gender and women’s development to be an integral part of the overall earthquake reconstruction rather than issues addressed periodically, a common gender understanding would be required. A number of stakeholders point to the idea of a so called “window of opportunity” in relation to the earthquake recovery. The idea refers to the utilization of the earthquake aftermath to alter prevailing practice and thinking in a number of fields. From several stands, the importance of not reinstating the social and economic inequalities from the pre-earthquake period is emphasised. For instance, the idea has been put forward in terms of using the opportunities the earthquake recovery provides to address cultural and traditional practices.

For the continuation of the reconstruction and for the management of future disasters, it seems there is a need for rights based gendered approaches where the benefits will accrue equally to men and women. It seems gender advocating bodies; international, local and from within
governmental institutions need to be active in bringing about these approaches. A rethinking of cultural practices impeding women’s earthquake recovery and overall development among governmental agencies, local and religious leaders as well as the population in general might be considered feasible. For the reconstruction to be gendered, it would require strong institutional gender awareness and commitments to be in place prior to the earthquake. This might have contributed to gender being incorporated effectively at an early stage in the recovery.
8 References


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