Our Rights, Our Development
A Research about Christian Women in Egypt and Their Perception of Everyday Life

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ABSTRACT

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As the Arabic spring had its effect on Egypt both women and men went out in the streets to claim their rights. Although people of Egypt had their hopes on a positive change the post-revolution has contained Human-Rights violations. Right-Based Approach (RBA) is a dominating perspective within the development landscape and states that if Human Rights are to benefit the right-holders they need to be owners of their development. It is done through the state ensuring the rights of the citizens who are able to act upon them. The purpose of this research is to investigate how Christian Egyptian women living in poverty experience Human Rights in their everyday life. It is done through in-depth interviews conducted with eight women in Cairo, Egypt. Their answers are placed within RBA to create an understanding of the situation of Human Rights in their everyday life. The research concluded that they express their rights being violated through both being excluded from the possibility to act upon their rights, but also that there is a lack of empowerment which would enable them to ensure their rights. Findings through their expression also indicate that the Egyptian state does not ensure their citizens their rights. To enable the women their rights the state has to create possibilities for them both through giving them opportunities but also empower them.

Keywords: Right-Based Approach, Human Rights, Human Rights and Development, Egypt

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I Introduction

Egypt went through a dramatic shift during 2011 when the Arabic spring\(^1\) swept through the country. The revolution was born from the spread dissatisfaction of unemployment, absence of economic opportunities and crime against Human Rights. Young people, most of them highly educated, organized the first protests against the regimes. Their campaign against corruption, inequality and police brutality gathered people from all social groups. Although the regime answered with brutal force and promises of improved reforms, the protests continued. It finally lead to President Hosni Mubarak’s resignation in February 11th.\(^2\) The first democratic election in Egypt in 31 years was conducted and their pursuit of freedom seemed to gain momentum. However, the post-revolution period has been marked by unrest and there are reports of Human Rights violations. Abuse from the police and restrictions on freedom of expression, association and religion seem to become the reality.\(^3\) The religious minorities in Egypt still have to endure discrimination and the protection from the government is still low. The Coptic Christians are especially affected and there are reports of attacks against Christians and their property.\(^4\) During the revolution women and men could participate and act together within the public spaces.\(^5\) But what does the situation look like today? Did the revolution bring the liberty and freedom the protesters asked for? Are the people of Egypt enjoying the rights they demanded?

Ensuring Human Rights is according to the Rights-Based Approach (RBA) not only about creating policy documents. In order to benefit the most vulnerable in the society, rights have to reach down to the citizens.\(^6\) The RBA has become a dominant perspective in the development landscape but what does it say in relation to the people living in poverty? To meet the multi dimensions of poverty the voices of the poor should be included to ensure a good poverty reduction. There are often obstacles in the development of people living in poverty which

\(^{1}\) The Arabic Spring is a comprehensive term for the national revolution in North Africa and the Middle East. Nationalencyklopedin, Arabiska våren, 23 May 2013, <http://www.ne.se/arabiska-v%C3%A5ren>.
\(^{5}\) Iskar Diana, Om att osynliggöra kvinnor i revolutionens nav, En textanalys av hur kvinnor skildras i rapporteringen om den Egyptska revolutionen, Lunds Universitet, 2012, p. 1.
correlate with rights and freedom. If the people are to lift themselves out of poverty they also need to have the freedom and opportunity to do so. Human Rights are a key aspect of this issue.\(^7\)

A major driving force with this paper has been the author’s longing for a deeper understanding of RBA. During his studies at Jönköping University the term RBA has occurred in several places without further explanation but with an attitude of importance. It is vital in the understanding of the future development landscape to acquire knowledge on the topic. The aim of this research is to look at how Christian women in Egypt are experiencing their rights. RBA will act as an analytical framework to tell us if their rights are being violated or not.

**2 Statement of purpose**

The purpose of this research is to investigate how Christian women in Egypt perceive their everyday lives.

**3 Research questions**

- How do Christian Egyptian women in Cairo perceive their everyday lives?
- What in their expressed experience can be related to Right-Based Approach?

**4 Background**

In this section the concept and practice of Human Rights will be explained. It will also contain information about Egypt which is the country where the in-depth interviews were conducted. The situation regarding Human Rights in Egypt will be explained.

**4.1 Human Rights**

The development of Human Rights occurred after the Second World War and was an effect of the creation of United Nations (UN). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948. It contains guidelines to ensure the rights of every individual around the world. At the meeting where 50 countries participated, eight waived from voting whilst none chose to vote against. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has 30 articles and serves to recognize human dignity and that every human’s rights should not be violated. The declaration acts as the foundation to ensure freedom, justice and peace in the world. If the human being has no chance of protecting himself/herself against oppression or

tyranny the Human Rights should be protected by the rule of law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights starts with article one that states ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood...’

4.2 Egypt
The country of Egypt is placed in North-East Africa with the Sinai dessert in Asia. It mainly consists of dessert with the river of Nile dividing the country in two which creates favourable regions for farming in the heart of the country. It has a population of 82 000 000 people in 2011 which makes it the largest country in the Middle East and the third largest country in Africa. The majority of the people are Arabs and the official language is Arabic. Islam has been the dominating religion in the country for 1000 years but one tenth of the population belongs to the Christian Coptic Church.

The political system has been marked by a strong presidential power ruled by the former president Hosni Mubarak who did not endorse democratic rights for his citizens. Because of the political oppression revolutionary events took place in 2011. It begun with a suicide bombing of a Coptic Church which was a starting point of a social movement organized on the platform of social media. The 25th of January 2011 thousands of people met and demonstrated on the National Police day. The following Friday after the Muslim Friday prayer a great number of protesters gathered at the Tahrir square in Cairo. On January 29 President Mubarak dissolved the government and appointed the former flight minister Ahmed Shafiq as new prime minister. The amount of protesters continued to grow even if curfew was announced. During the whole month protesters gathered at the Tahrir square and the 11th of February Mubarak announced his reassignment, the power was given to a military council under the leadership of Field Marshal Muhammed Hussien Tantawi. In November the same year the first round of parliament election was conducted. Parties which were previously banned did participate which included both secular and religious parties. In May 2012 the first free presidential election in Egypt was conducted where Mohammad Mursi somewhat unexpectedly won with 24,8 percent of the votes. The result implies that the election in June the same year was between the candidate from the Muslim Brotherhood and the former regime which was represented by the ex flight force General. The

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9 Please see appendix 1.
24th of June it was announced that the Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammad Mursi was elected President.10

4.3 Human Rights in Egypt

The republic of Egypt has signed and ratified both the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, both which are the foundation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.11 The issue of Human Rights in Egypt before the revolution was mostly affected by the Emergency Law. The law was implemented after the assassination of President Anwar El Sadat in October 1981. It enabled the ruling power to act against fundamental freedom and rights written in the Egyptian constitution. Several areas have been neglected as the freedom of assembly and association, freedom of expression, freedom of movement. The President of the Republic had the authority to arrest and punish those suspected to be dangerous without a fair trial. The President also had the right to monitor and confiscate newspapers and other publications.12 Rights for the labour worker were also affected by the restrictions. Although workers had been able to form trade unions, members had to endure harassment. Members were arrested or got restrictions on their movement. Discrimination against women and religious minorities as the Muslim group Baha’is and Christians continued without any protection. Women were often victims of domestic violence and there is bad legislation to ensure their rights.13

Post-revolution has enabled new opportunities for rights but there remain problems correlated with Human Rights. Even if a new President is elected the restrictions from the Mubarak era are still affecting the population. The police continue the usage of torture and arresting protesters. There are still TV stations being ordered to shutdown and several newspapers have been censured. Religious tensions remain between Christian and Muslim groups and the police fail to protect those being affected. Women are still harassed in public spheres and Islamic members of parliament insist on the lowering of minimum age of marriage, revoking the rights for women to divorce and making female genital mutilation legal.14

4.4 Christian minorities in Egypt

The Christian groups in Egypt live among the majority of the Sunni Muslim population. The religious demography in Egypt constitutes of 90 percent Sunni Muslim and about ten percent Christian. Within the Christian community the Coptic Orthodox Church is the largest one; other Christian groups compose of two percent of the entire Christian community. The situation for the Christian minority has shifted historically and during the late 20th century the Coptic groups faced favourable times. As changes in the economic system during 1970’s benefitted the Coptic elite, frustration within Islamic radicals grew. The president of Egypt Anwar Sadat started to cooperate with the Islamists which led to the politicizing religion in form of usage of sharia law as foundation for legislation. Coptic property started to get vandalised and tension grew between the Christian minority and surroundings. The Coptic Church requested the solvent of discriminatory laws and sharia law as foundation for legislation, it stirred the conflict even further and clashes between Copts and Muslims took place. After the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981 the situation deepened and violence against Copts continued. Restrictions towards Copts were established included building and repairing Churches, changes in the educational curriculum which distinguish Copts and Muslims and ignoring Coptic cultural, and resistance towards admitting Copts in to faculties and Universities.

The current situation for the Christian minority is still troublesome and discrimination is part of everyday life. Although the new constitution, which was ratified on 26 of December 2012, emphasised freedom of religion, the government fails to ensure these freedoms. The new constitutions still refers sharia law as the foundation of legislation and that the interpretation of the law should be done by the Sunni Islamic Imams of Al Azhar Mosque. Reports also show that the government has not been able to prevent, investigated and prosecute crime against religious minorities especially against Coptic Christians which creates a situation of impunity. The police acts slowly in order to stop violence towards Christians and their property, and cases where Muslims accuse Christian for blasphemy or denigrating Islam have become more common. A discrimination against Christian in public seats can also be seen, the parliament only contains two percent Christians although they make up ten percent of the entire population.

Discrimination within Universities and local governments is also apparent against Christians,
there are none of the 27 local governors that are Christian and the University exclude non-Muslims teacher because of the curriculum contains teachings of the Qur’an. Converts between Islam and Christianity is often related to tension and conflict and an Egyptian that has converted from Islam to Christianity do not get the legally acceptance on their identity documents. The Egyptian court has also ruled against conversions on the basis of disparagement towards the official state religion. There has also been cases where Christian women been forced to converted by Muslim men.19

5 Previous research

The following section will present previous studies within the field of RBA and the development of RBA.

As the author started the research a review of previous studies was made in the field of RBA. During the review the author noted that research conducted within the field of RBA to be mostly in relation to participants within projects. Pells article *Rights are everything we don’t have: clashing conceptions of vulnerability and agency in the daily lives of Rwandan children and youth* is a case study of Rwandan children and their experiences of being within a project. It claims to be working from a RBA perspective. The article contained important views and expressions from the participants but still only of those already participating within development project. Their experiences are of importance but still reviewed and measured if being or not being participants. Questions of how they experience their everyday lives outside the projects framework appeared.

Papers found within the field of RBA also included reviews of implementing RBA by NGO’s or of policy documents created by institutions within the international development landscape. Klara Jamison Gromark made a Bachelor Thesis with the title *Doing Development Right, Rights-Based Development and the NGO Agenda: a Case study from Guatemala*. Her research lifted important aspects of women and their perceptions of RBA in development but yet again within a NGO working with RBA.21 Christopher Holmbäck conducted in his Master Thesis a minor field study of six NGO’s in Rwanda working with RBA. The 25 interviews he made were done with both country directors and field workers. It brought important theoretical understanding but reviewed a

perspective which did not include the right-holders. Another author which brought a deeper understanding of RBA was David Eduardo Nilsson in his research *Exploring Human Rights in Development, A Right-Based Analysis of the EU’s Development Strategies*. Although it contributed to the theoretical understanding of research was done at the policy level. It enabled understanding of RBA and finding of knowledge gaps. As the previous research had already explored those participating in projects it seemed relevant to include individuals that are non-participants and their views.

5.1 Development of RBA

RBA that has its ground in the Human Rights debate started to develop at the end of the Cold War. The discussion about Human Rights in development started to take major impact in 1990 and development workers tried to seek beyond the relation between development and economic growth. The failure of several economic packages with attempts to save developing countries from poverty and create economic growth made democracy and Human Rights more relevant to development. This made it possible for the new perspective of development to emerge, namely the RBA. Although it started to make major impact in the beginning of 1990 the language of rights has been on the agenda for a long time. The issue of rights can be described as carried of those who searched for liberty and rights in developing countries and former colonies. The entry of several former colonies into the UN during the 1970’s made development not only be on the base of economic development but also about cultural and social rights. Developing countries could influence the UN in a way that finally resulted in the New International Economic Order. The intention was to bring up the rights of developing countries in global economy, trade, finance, aid, investment and information flows. It finally lead to discussion about the importance of rights and development in the international development agenda through the Declaration of Right to Development that was conducted by the UN general assembly in 1986. The Declaration of Right to Development expresses that the right to development is a human right. Every human should be able to participate, contribute and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development. It serves to enable fundamental human rights and freedom and place

26 Uvin 2007, p. 598.
27 Uvin 2007, p. 598.
the human in the core of development. It also implies that the state has the right and the duty to improve well-being of its citizens.\textsuperscript{28}

Even if it was non-binding this took the rights from the state-citizen relationship to a global level.\textsuperscript{29} In 1993 the Declaration of Right to Development was re-adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna but this time with a broader acceptance among the participants and it could be emphasized in a global scale. Though it made worldwide recognition it also had to endure some political scepticism where legal scholars announced it to be a good thing but practically meaningless. To include all aspects of development into one perspective and then try to implement it can be seen as a utopian project.\textsuperscript{30}

The Declaration of Right to Development is also grounded in a deeper Human Rights debate which started off in the division between civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights in the year of 1966. The Declaration of Right to Development emphasized a merging of both those perspectives.\textsuperscript{31} The two groups of rights are often defined as generations of Human Rights where civil and political rights are mentioned as the first generation and ESC as the second generation. The first generation includes those rights that often are defined as negative rights where states are not to trespass certain basic values that violate human dignity. Examples of negative rights are freedom of speech, association and religion. The second generation is rights that states are to ensure and promote towards its citizens. It includes rights such as the right to education, adequate standard of living and the highest obtainable standard of health. It is often mentioned as positive rights. A definition of so called third generation of rights has also been developed recently. The Declaration of Right to Development is a part of that development but also specific rights as the right of self determination. The third generation of rights puts an even stronger emphasis on the individual rights.\textsuperscript{32}

\section*{5.2 Integration of Human Rights in development}

Within the development of a new approach of rights the way aid was delivered also changed. A shift from the project based funding towards budget support to recipient countries started to be more and more common. Both ways are currently used and the new way of delivering aid made it possible to work from two dimensions. The new way is to strengthen public institutions and to

\textsuperscript{29} Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, 2004, p. 1422.
\textsuperscript{30} Uvin, 2007, p. 599.
strengthen the civil society, in that way make it possible for civil society to express rights to which public institutions respond. This kind of rights talk make beneficiaries involved in democratic processes, which goes from the old way of trying to meet the need of those that are participating in a project, to make them recognize and claim their rights. The way of including beneficiaries to the process enables projects to be more political while working with advocacy of rights, rather than just make beneficiaries to be solely participants in projects.33

An important contribution to the RBA development is Amartya Sen´s book *Development as Freedom* from 1999. He states that if development will occur it is dependent on the capability of the people and the freedom to live the life that he or she values, free from poverty. Poverty is defined as not only an exclusion from the economic opportunities but also an exclusion from social needs.34

The development of RBA made its way from the former colonies striving towards freedom to the poor people’s rights to development. It also included a development of all rights and not only economic participation but also a merging of Human rights into development. The definition is still under construction and the debate has been around if it is only about state-citizens relationship or if there is any global responsibility. Debates have also occurred regarding if rights should be defined by those who are right-holders or by those that are duty-bearers.35

5.3 RBA

As described in the previous section RBA wants to integrate Human Rights into development. It aims to ensure the right-holders with their rights to enable development. This section will present the central concepts of RBA.

5.3.1 Social contract

According to Offenheiser and Holcombe Social Contract is an important concept within RBA. Social Contract creates the foundation for the integration of Human Rights in development. The inclusion of Human Rights enables problems to be reformulated into right violations which have their foundation in deeper international law legislation. Social contract has its foundation in John Locke’s *The rights of the individual*. Locke explained that the individual has certain rights such as liberty, property and life. After the French Revolution those rights were mentioned as natural rights through The French Declaration of Right of Men and Citizen. Natural rights refer to the rights of liberty, property and life as natural, inalienable and sacred. The state agrees on ensuring

35 Uvin, 2004, p. 16.
these rights which act as a basis for the social contract. By entering the civil society the individuals agree on the social contract. Social contract today exists through legal documents promoting Human Rights which national governments shall uphold. Human Rights act to promote and protect individual and collective rights. The social contract depends on the fact that individuals agree on the state to possess power and authority to get protection of human dignity. The international community agreed on the Declaration of Right to Development at the Vienna Conference 1993. Through the international community’s agreement to the social contract on Right to Development, a wide recognition of both Civil and Political rights but also ESC rights, were enabled. These rights are a fundamental basis of RBA. Social contract within RBA makes citizen right-holders and the state duty-bearers. RBA promotes that every individual within the civil society is the holder of these rights in which the state is to ensure.36

5.3.2 Accountability

As RBA has its foundation in the Declaration of Human Rights but also in The Declaration of Right to Development makes the concept of Social Contract vital within the perspective. By arguing that the citizens are right-holders there must be someone that has the accountability to ensure those rights.37 It could create a unique opportunity where international policy also needs to take into account the participants’ voices of the processes and make distant international Human Rights something that can be implemented in a local context.38 An Indian politician states that the development of RBA must come from within and cannot be based on external pressure. Sustainable social, economic and political development depends on coherence with the local culture and values.39 Human Rights should according to RBA be ensured by the state in three ways. Human Rights should be respected by the state and not violated or interfered by it. The state must protect their citizens from another party trying to violate the Human Rights. And the state has to fulfil their obligations which enable their citizens to enjoy Human Rights. Ensuring the Human Rights cannot be based on formulating policy documents. The duty-bearer has to create the circumstances necessary to ensure the right-holders their rights.40 O’Dwyer and Unerman argue that if duty-bearers are able to create the linkage between rights and right-holders

37 Uvin 2007, p. 603.
it enables those who should benefit from rights to become directors of their own development.\textsuperscript{41}

It illustrates clearly that if development acts on ground level the considerations of those living there are of importance.\textsuperscript{42}

5.3.3 Empowerment

The concept of empowerment argues that if you make the right-holders aware of what rights they are holders of, they will be able to advocate upon them.\textsuperscript{43} If you empower the right-holders you are ‘enabling the poor to gain and keep control over their development process...’\textsuperscript{44} Participation is important within this concept and entails the process of providing the right-holders with relevant information and ensuring the representation of important actors to the process. As RBA has its standing point in Human Rights it also works from the perspective of non-discrimination. Non-discrimination is a basic value in the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and serves to empower right-holders.\textsuperscript{45} Uvin makes an important statement regarding empowerment, ‘promoting human dignity through the development of claims that seek to empower excluded groups and that seek to create socially guaranteed improvements in policy.’\textsuperscript{46} He also states that the concepts of empowerment do make the right-holders aware of their rights. It changes the way right-holders perceive themselves towards the duty-bearers. It includes that promoting the rights for education does not end with financial resources. It also implies highlighting circumstances which could be discriminating and exclude right-holders.\textsuperscript{47}

5.3.4 Basis for this research

RBA acts on two different levels. The first level contains International law that should be implemented at state level which ensures basic Human Rights for the population.\textsuperscript{48} The second level is based on civil society and is about making right-holders integrated participants of their own rights. The way you approach the root-causes is moving away from the classic way of implementing projects from ‘needs’ towards ‘rights’, and from ‘charity’ into ‘duties’.\textsuperscript{49} All of these concepts demonstrate an approach which tries to address the very root causes of poverty in a way

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} O’Dwyer Brendan & Unerman Jeffery, \textit{Enchanting the role of accountability in promoting the rights of beneficiaries of development NGO’s}, Manchester Business School seminar, 2009, p. 13.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Gready 2008, p. 742.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Gready, 2005, p. 146.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Uvin 2007, p. 604.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Uvin, 2004, p. 163.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Uvin, 2004, p. 163.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi 2006, p. 1416.
\end{itemize}
that makes right-holders active participants which calls upon their rights against the duty-bearers.\textsuperscript{50}

Those two perspectives are working together. One is about making legislation on international level which emphasizes principles within the development field such as accountability. The other perspective transforms rights into political and social processes conducted by NGO’s and the right-holders. The first level shows minimum-level requirements to ensure basic Human Rights. In the second level is the process in how to reach these minimum requirements. If there is a lack of one of these levels, there is a high risk for the rights concept to fail.\textsuperscript{51}

In this research, RBA will act as a measurement of rights in the Egyptian women’s lives. Their expressed experiences of rights in their everyday lives will be measured in the discussion by the understanding of RBA. The very essence of RBA is the integration of Human Rights down to the right-holders through the concepts of social contract, accountability and empowerment which aim to create development from beneath.\textsuperscript{52} This will make the right-holders aware of their rights and be able to act upon them.\textsuperscript{53} The aim of this research is not to implement RBA in practice but try to reach those supposed to be affected of it and explore their expressed views of rights and put it in relation to RBA.

6 Method

The following section will explain the implementation of the research. It will start by describing how the interviews were conducted. Later a description of the analytical framework chosen for the empirical material will be presented. The scientific and ethical aspects will also be reviewed.

6.1 Interviews

The interviews are the foundation for this research and were conducted by the author in the beginning of April 2013. It included eight women from Cairo, Egypt whom all were between 20 and 55 years old. They all express a belief in Christianity but had different backgrounds and places of origin. They are all living in Cairo at the moment.

RBA has been criticized to be too vague and hard to implement though it’s important in the pursuit towards development. It is often placed on a theoretical level and implemented on a policy level. To explore RBA deeper this paper will approach these women and let their everyday

\textsuperscript{50} Pells 2012, p. 436.  
\textsuperscript{51} Greedy 2008, p. 738.  
\textsuperscript{52} Uvin, 2004, p. 122.  
\textsuperscript{53} Uvin 2004, p. 124.
lives tell us how they experience rights and if they are violated. If someone’s rights are violated knowledge regarding what kind of rights that person sees as important is required. Working through an RBA perspective is to ensure that those specific rights that people express are met. To investigate the women’s expressed rights this paper approaches in-depth interviews. Hopefully this will grasp their very inner feelings of what is important and how they define rights.

As the author explored RBA and its definition he found extensive empirical findings on right-holders already included in projects. To work from the perspective of RBA is in that matter only to make the right-holders participate and be engaged in a framework of views. Often this has been set at the theoretical level and is to be implemented as policies. To choose in-depth interviews seemed relevant since in-depth interviews try to reach the women’s views of everyday life and what the expressed problems could be. The women’s stories are not able to tell what every woman in Egypt from now on values. But it could hopefully contribute in the context of development and its views of implementing global policies.

6.1.1 Selection of the interviewees
To make general assumptions within qualitative research, an emphasis on how the selection of material is made. The selection of qualitative material was done on the basis of strategic sampling, in accordance to Metodpraktikan. The situation for the Christian minority has been troublesome the last decade, to look at democratic changes in Egypt the treatment of the minority is of interest. Therefore the author choose the Christian minority in Egypt as the focus of the empirical material. As the author did his internship during the spring term in 2012 he established contact with Jan-Erik Henriksson. He is a programme coordinator for several projects conducted in Egypt for the NGO InterAct MENA and helped the author to establish contact with Think & Do which is a local NGO in Egypt. Think & Do is a NGO working with developing poor communities in Egypt. The selection of the interviewees was done between the author and Think & Do. The connection between the local NGO and the women was made through NGO’s weekly visits to areas where poverty is widespread. The interviewees’ financial situation differs slightly but one criterion was their relevance towards participation in a development project. Their perspectives of rights are of most interest whereas RBA is focused on those whose rights would have been violated. In Metodpraktikan three criteria are outlined for how to conduct in-depth interviews which are the interview structure chosen for this research. The first criterion is to pick someone you do not know, the second is to choose a group of few interviewees, around ten. The third and last is the interviewees should not be subjective experts of the research in

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54 Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wängnerud, 2012, p 156.
question since their lifeworlds shall be of interest and not their level of knowledge.\textsuperscript{55} The criterion of in-depth interviews in respondent character also includes having the maximum variation of those being the interviewees.\textsuperscript{56} For the research the author selected a group of same sex and similar financial situation since they could be a relevant group in a development project. Otherwise variation within the group was of age, occupation, place of origin and level of education which the author tried to control. Their similar religious belonging was something that was discussed between the author and the local NGO. To investigate the Christian minority seemed interesting whereas RBA wants to recognize excluded groups in the society.

6.1.2 In-depth interviews
The performed interviews were made according to in-depth interview design which was described in ‘Metodpraktikan’. In-depth interviews seemed to be a good method when conducting interviews of respondent character. It enables an interviewer to reach the lifeworlds of the interviewees which seemed relevant for this research.\textsuperscript{57} The preparation of the interviews was made through an extensive research of RBA which gave the author a pre-understanding of its nature. This made it possible to create relevant questions. During the interviews the author tried to use broad questions of everyday life and difficulties it may contain. In-depth interviews as method implies to have specific questions but also to have different themes as a base for the interview guide.\textsuperscript{58} The author also added some areas which he would like the respondents to address. Those were linked to the foundation in rights which is the base of RBA.

6.1.3 Conduction of interviews
The interviews were made at Think & Do’s office in Cairo, Egypt which is a local NGO stationed in the country. The interviews took place in a separate room together with a female interpreter. Time was given for informal conversation to create a feeling of security and not to rush in to the questions. The interviewer deliberately chose to mention his civil status and religious belonging in the beginning of each interview to create a connection with the interviewee. Think & Do helped with the connection towards the women and their travel to the office. Since Think & Do’s work were known in the women’s area they had a relaxed relationship towards those working at the office. Discussions regarding placement of interviews were held between the author and Think & Do. The environment can play an important role to create a

\textsuperscript{55} Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wängnerud, 2012, p 259.
\textsuperscript{56} Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wängnerud, 2012, p. 260.
\textsuperscript{58} Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wängnerud, 2012, p. 264.
relaxed feeling of the interviews. The NGO expressed a concern about conducting interviews in areas where the women live. To conduct the interviews at their office seemed to be a good alternative. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour 30 minutes. The duration depended on the women’s desire to express themselves. The interviews were recorded which was approved by the interviewees. There is a possibility according to Denscombe that the interviewer can influence the interviews, aspects to take into consideration are sex, age and ethnic origin and how the interview can be perceived by the interviewees. An interpreter was used during the interviews since the interviewer didn’t have knowledge regarding the interviewees’ language. The interpreter was female and of Egyptian origin, she was an employee at Think & Do’s office. Her main duties are the daily connection between Think & Do and the international organisations which the NGO cooperates with. Her knowledge of the local language and her gender helped the interpreting between the interviewer and the interviewees. Her knowledge regarding connections with international NGO’s could also help her to understand the interviewer’s questions. During the interviews the interviewer also took notes if there seemed to be conversation outside the questions asked. To ensure control of what was said the interviewer tried to ask if the interpreter interpretive things as it were said. Also if the interpreter asked questions which the interviewer did not ask. In that way did the interviewer try to ensure that the answers the interviewees made were answered with the right intention.

6.1.4 Analysis of interviews

After the interviews were conducted they were transcribed into text and analysed. Transcription was made in accordance with guidelines in *Den Kvalitativa Forskningsintervjun*. It followed by an extensive reading throughout the entire text to get an overview of the whole material. Those parts in the interview which served as important were underlined and summarized. Kvale and Brinkmann argue that there are three perspectives in which the material can be analysed within the hermeneutic structure. The first one is, as they describe it, the perspective of ‘self-understanding’. It is when the interpreter tries to formulate concentrated sentences which contain the meaning of what the interviewee tried to express. The second one is the perspective of ‘commonsensical critical understanding’ which is to analyse the interview through common sense. It brings the understanding over the interviewee’s self-understanding of what he or she says and tries to stand critical towards the answers. Focus is on either the content of what is said

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60 Denscombe, 2009, p. 244.
or the one saying it. The third and last perspective is the ‘theoretical understanding’ which goes beyond the self-understanding of the interviewee and the common sense perspective and puts a theoretical frame over what is said to understand the answers. Examples would be to apply a theory of psychoanalysis to create an understanding of the answers given.62 The analysis for this research uses both the perspective of ‘self-understanding’ and ‘theoretical understanding’. In ‘self-understanding’ it is the interviewees’ experience of the subject that is of importance in order to reach their lifeworlds which will be done in the result section. The analysis of ‘theoretical understanding’ will be done in the discussion section to explore their views in the perspective of RBA. To put their experience in relation to RBA can shed a light on the situation of Human Rights for women in Egypt. During the process of conducting the expressed views made by the women the author summarized the answers in smaller sentences and placed them within categories chosen. The author looked at the same time at the whole material in order to create the hermeneutic circle.

6.1.5 Ethics in interviews

All the interviewed women were informed about the purpose of the research and in what way it would be used. It was done both through an information mail conducted two weeks before the interviews took place,63 but also in the introduction of the interviews. During the introduction they were informed that they could choose not to answer questions and that there are no right or wrong answers. As the interviews were conducted between a male interviewer and female interviewees the interviewer took expressions or reactions to sensitive questions into consideration. To be aware of the bodily expressions of the interviewees is of importance. All of the interviewees stated that they would like the empirical material to be presented without their names in it. To keep a living feeling in the presentation of the material each of the women was given pseudonyms. As the interviewer is of another sex the importance of a female interpreter was emphasized. It enabled a connection which otherwise could be lost.64 After the interviews the women received a compensation for their participation. It contained of 70 EGP and was motivated by Think & Do to make it possible for the women to participate in the study. It was informed during the contact between the local NGO and the women before the research. To get from their everyday obligation was according to Think & Do quite difficult. The compensation could enable for them to give time for the research. As it was agreed before the interviews were conducted the author took this in mind and emphasized the voluntary nature before the

63 Please see appendix 2.
interview. The author also tried to take power relations between the interviewer and the interviewees into consideration.

6.1.6 Presentation of the interviewees

Amani: She is 44 years old and living in the outskirts of Shubra which is an area in Cairo, Egypt. Her source of income is mainly through her husband but she receives 100 Egyptian pounds (EGP) every third month, the money comes from renting out parts of the building they live in. She is married and a mother of two children. She grew up in Shubra. Her level of education is first year of her Diploma, she was at that time 20 years old.⁶⁵

Badra: Her age is 52 or 53, she has not the exact birth date. She is living in an area called Elware a place near the area of Shubra, Cairo. Her husband passed away nine years ago and she did not receive any pension until four months ago. The pension is 214 EGP every month. She has no education. She was born in Cairo but her parents were from Upper Egypt. She never mentioned how many children she has but mentioned them living with her.⁶⁶

Cala: She is 32 years old and was born in Elsawia but lives in the area of Im babah close to Shubra, Cairo. She has two children, her husband passed away two months ago. She only conducted four years in school; she was twelve years old when she had to stop. She went to literacy class afterwards to be able to read and write. Her source of income is provided by her brother.⁶⁷

Dahab: Her age is 35 years old and she is working at a nursery where she receives a monthly salary. She is married and has four children, her husband is at home because of illness. She is living in Im Babah. Her level of education is limited to three years of preparatory school and she was fifteen when she quitted. She was born in Im Babah.⁶⁸

Fadwa: She is 32 or 33 and she doesn’t know exactly. She is living in Im Babah but was born in Basabri an area in Cairo. Her source of income is mainly gifts from people or if she can sell something. She has three children whereas one has special needs and does not live with them. She has no education.⁶⁹

Ghadir: She is 34 years old and lives in Im Babah, Cairo but her origin is Upper Egypt, Minia. She is married and has two children. Her source of income is limited, she sews to get income for

⁶⁵ Amani, Interview, 2013.
⁶⁶ Badra, Interview, 2013.
⁶⁷ Cala, Interview, 2013.
⁶⁸ Dahab, Interview, 2013.
⁶⁹ Fadwa, Interview, 2013.
her education. She attends the Open University to become a teacher for Kindergarten one but because of the limited income she is not able to finish her studies.\(^{70}\)

Hafa: She is 28 years old and her main source of income is her husband, she also works part time as a hairdresser. She is married and has two children. She was born and lives in Im Babah, Cairo. Her level of education is limited to three years of preparatory school.\(^{71}\)

Iba: She is 31 years old and she is living in Im Babah, she was born in Shubra but later on moved to Im Babah. She went to third year of preparatory until she had to quit. She has no source of income today. She is married and has three children.\(^{72}\)

### 6.2 Hermeneutics

As the purpose of this study is of qualitative nature the method described accordingly to Hermeneutics structure seemed relevant. Hermeneutics developed in 18\(^{\text{th}}\)-19\(^{\text{th}}\) century by Friedrich Schleiermacher as a method to systematically organize text and interpretation. The foundation of hermeneutics is from the Greek word hermeneuein which means to interpret. Richard E. Palmer argues for three basic concepts within hermeneutics. The first one is to express something with words, the second is that hermeneutics is about explaining and clarifying through someone’s view. This explanation includes a background or context in which the information is to be understood. The third concept is to bring an unknown text into a context that is known to us. These three are to lead us in towards understanding. Schleiermacher started in biblical texts but took the theory of interpretation further to include non-biblical text. This was made since he wanted to investigate understanding of things. He developed three rules on the method of interpretation where the first is the importance of context and the author behind the text, the second is to put the text and the context together, and the third rule is trying to reach an understanding of the author’s thoughts.\(^{73}\)

### 6.2.1 Hermeneutic circle

In the method of hermeneutics the hermeneutic circle is important in interpreting. Understanding of the material occurs when a part is related to the whole material.\(^{74}\) The pre-understanding for the analytical framework will be the theoretical understanding of political, economic, social and cultural rights, which the interviewees’ answers will be placed within. Pre-understanding was also made through previous research that was done before the interviews for this research. This made

\(^{70}\) Ghadir, Interview, 2013.

\(^{71}\) Hafa, Interview, 2013.

\(^{72}\) Iba, Interview, 2013.


it possible for the author to create knowledge about what questions were relevant for the intended interviews. During the analytic process the interviews were divided into parts, and later placed in relation to the whole of the interviews and an understanding of reasoning appeared. In that way a new whole can be created.

6.2.2 The hermeneutic analysis of interviews
To make an analysis of interviews within a hermeneutic framework the intention is to reach into the interviewee’s lifeworld. It will make a crucial aspect of the interviews whereas authentic dialogue can appear between the interviewer and the interviewees who will create important understanding to occur. The interviewer should have relevant knowledge to enable a meaningful conversation. The Interviewer’s pre-knowledge of cultural and social aspects can be essential when the interview also is a participatory observation. To conduct an interpretation the pre-understanding or analytical framework is vital as the material is collected and interpreted. The interviews were summarized into categories of political, economic, social and cultural rights which serve as a way of organizing the material and finding relevant expressions. Because these thematic categories were used during the interview it seemed relevant to use them as categories in the conduction of the empirical material. In that way the author could make sure not create something that does not exist but try to stay ‘faithful’ towards the interviewees’ responses. It may make it possible to grasp the intended meaning of the interviewees’ answers. To recognize one’s own pre-understanding and not use it to create an interpretation that does not exist is a perspective to recognize but also hard to walk away from.

6.3 Validity, reliability and generalization in qualitative research
Validation within social science has become a matter of whether a method investigates what it states to investigate. Validation in social science is not about the classic positivistic approach towards what is measurable or do you measure what you think you measure. Validation in a qualitative research is to ensure that the author has chosen the right method and is not separated to the empirical gathering but is within the whole research process. In this research the author started to conduct a research in the theoretical field to get an understanding of previous research that has been done. It enabled the author to choose the relevant method for conducting the research. As described in previous sections, RBA acts to ensure the rights of those on local

77 Svensson & Starrin, 1996, p. 188.
79 Thornberg Fejes, Handbok I kvalitativ analys, Liber AB, Stockholm, 2009, p. 64.
80 Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 266.
ground and to include them in to the process. As the right-holders are in focus for the research the method of in-depth interviews was chosen. Before departure a letter of information about the purpose of the interviews was sent to the local NGO in order to inform the interviewees. During the interviews open ended questions were asked to grasp the interviewees’ reasoning behind the subject. In the analytic phase the method of hermeneutics was chosen since it includes the research of lifeworlds. The interviewees’ experience of rights is a foundation in the research and therefore could a hermeneutic perspective be used in order to conclude their thoughts. In the result section the chosen categories are the same as the thematic categories for the interviews. It seemed appropriate to use the same categories whereas they are wide and made it possible for the interviewees’ answers to stay personal. In the result section the author tried to make the interviewees’ voices to be heard by the presentation of several quotations which would bring forward their expressed experiences of rights.

Reliability is how reliable the results of the research are, often in terms of if the result is able to be reproduced.\textsuperscript{81} Within the method of in-depth interviews you are dealing with experiences and expressed feelings which are hard to reproduce. The questions are asked in an open-ended way to try grasping the interviewees’ experiences. If the questions had a more direct and narrow approach there would be a higher risk of missing their experience.\textsuperscript{82} On what basis can we generalize our finding into a wider context? Kvale and Brinkmann answer that question with the question of ‘Why should we generalize?’ Often in social science generalization is replaced with the possibility of transferring the knowledge to other situations.\textsuperscript{83} At the end of this research the empirical material is placed in relation to RBA. Hopefully it will be able to contribute to the discussion within the field of RBA as a whole.

7 Result
In this section the empirical material for the research will be presented. The interviews have been categorized into political, economic, social and cultural rights whereas these were main themes in the interview guide. It is also in this section the first research question is being answered.

7.1 Political rights
The interviewees express the political situation as very uncertain and they feel that an important part of their life is to feel secure. They also related some of their everyday problems to the fact that the instability within the country is preventing them to change their respective situation.

\textsuperscript{81} Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 263.
\textsuperscript{82} Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{83} Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 187.
I’m afraid now there is no security I feel fear of harmless could happen to my children and to my husband, sometimes they kidnap the girls here so put it inside us not to feel secure, to have peace inside, even if I think about any project to start I don’t find the good atmosphere to help me to start this project now a days, the society is becoming very very very bad and very hard.  

Although the political situation is expressed as hard the revolution that happened during 2011 made some of women aware of the political situation. They state to value the opportunity to participate in the discussions. Amani argues that before the revolution people were not aware of political things but now women who before just sat at home and did not participate are talking about political things. She continues to reason regarding laws in the country that she feels discrimination between women and men. To stand up against the men and taking her rights is something that she feels strongly for and she ends the statement with,

I have to stand in front of men and to tell men that we are not less than him and this is what I did with my brothers when it came to the in heritage you know. 

To participate in the elections is an event that most of the women brought up during the interviews. They express that it made them feel important. The fact that they could be part of changing something made them feel that their voices are to be counted on. Even if most of them also added that their beliefs on the system were minor. Cala expressed the feeling of being as important as men when she voted and it has become a role of a woman. Dahab describes it as a feeling of being a human being, ‘feel that I was important and I have a you know a human being and I’m an important person...’ Badra explains that she knows she has the freedom to vote but that she does not feel that it counts. Iba says that she expresses her opinion about the political issues but she doesn’t know how to reach those in charge. The development after the revolution has made the women aware but has also made them doubt the system. Ghadir expresses that she was positive at the beginning but during the time of the post-revolution her views have changed. She chooses to express herself through the word of ‘cheated by all the people that are there...’ She also expressed a doubt about the security development and the fact that her rights are not secured by those in charge, ‘but now when you go to the police station you will not get your rights...’

84 Interview, Ghadir, 2013.  
85 Interview, Amani, 2013.  
86 Interview, Ghadir, 2013.  
87 Interview, Cala, 2013.  
88 Interview, Dahab, 2013.  
89 Interview, Badra, 2013.  
90 Interview, Iba, 2013.  
91 Interview, Ghadir, 2013.  
92 Interview, Ghadir, 2013.
7.2 Economic rights

During the interviews the women reason around their participation in economic issues. They often express a will to contribute to the everyday life and the obligations that they have towards their families. Two of the interviewed women do work today, Dahab is working fulltime at a nursery and Hafa is working as a hairdresser at home where customers come but not on a regular basis. The others express a frustration of not being able to find jobs and argue that it is because of their lack of education, health problems or their responsibility to the family. Their dependence on their husbands is also something that was brought up during the interviews. Amani explains that her husband broke his arm which made the situation hard for them, she felt at that time that she regretted not having an education or worked before getting married. ‘Because when the eh eh eh obligation becoming more and more for the children and their schools, I regret to work that I didn’t work since my youth...’ 93 Badra tried to find a job after her husband’s death but was not able to find any because of her limited education. Her position as responsible for the family makes it hard for her since she is expected to be the one contributing into the family. The fact that her children are still staying at home is also making her feel hindered to move around, she is not able to feel free. She states, ‘I would love to enjoy more freedom but I cannot because of the obligation that I have towards my family and my children...’ 94 Dahab had the chance to start working when her husband got sick and that has meant a lot for her. The change is both in relation to herself, the feeling of being better as a woman, but also structures at home. An example of these changes is how they decide over things, ‘before I worked I felt that the work and the decisions were his all decisions but not now[...] it is better...’ 95 To be part of the decisions is also something that other women have experienced as important for them in their everyday lives. Hafa who has been given the opportunity to work as a hairdresser at home, she doesn’t only value the financial contribution of work but also that it enables her to manage things outside her family. Work has also helped her find herself, ‘it is important because it is a source of income [...] not only, financial resource for me but I found myself...’ 96 Another area which Hafa but also Dahab and Iba mentioned is the opportunity to meet with other people. The social contact outside home seems to be related to the feeling of being free and to participate in the community. 97 Iba expresses the following, ‘It makes me feel different when I go out and meet with people and come back that I meet with people so this

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93 Interview, Amani, 2013.
94 Interview, Badra, 2013.
95 Interview, Dahab, 2013.
96 Hafa, Interview, 2013.
97 Hafa, Interview, 2013; Dahab, Interview, 2013; Badra, Interview, 2013.
makes me feel more happy not to be at home all the time."98 The economic issues include both an expression of frustration and hinders not being able to possess enough financial resources but also a feeling that it could create self-reliance. The women see a relationship between being able to work and decide things but also to participate outside their homes.99 Most of them regret not being able to finish their education which would have helped them get a job.100 Iba explains that if she would be able to continue her education her life would not be the same as it is today. She feels hindered in her life and her plans for the future were stopped because of an engagement that was planned for her.

I go to school, until third preparatory until 9 years school[...]Because I got engaged and my father told me to stop... education[...] Yes I would love to continue, If I continued it wouldn’t be the same life like now[...] If I had the chance and if I had the complete freedom I would have continued the education and be a hostess.101

The responsibility to the family is something that makes it difficult for the women to participate within the labour market or education that could lead them further. Iba explains that the obstacle for her to get a job is her responsibility over her son when he comes home.102 Amani both brings up the need of working in order to help out with the obligations at home but also her will to take care of her family. She also explains that her husband did not want her to both work and take care of the chores at home.

I didn’t ask and my husband he didn’t like me to go for work ehh, because my mother and his mother both of them were working and they knew and they saw how far they suffered from this [...] Suffered to have work outside home and inside home.103

Fadwa says that work would help both in the financial obligations toward her children in school but also enable her to plan for the future.104 Ghadir is trying to help herself in order to continue her education at the Open University by sewing at home and she expresses that the financial situation is hindering her from doing things that she likes.105 Iba also states that she is trying to get some income through sewing at home. This would be a way of participating in the community and contributing to the family financially.106

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98 Iba, Interview, 2013.
99 Hafa, Interview, 2013.
100 Fadwa, Interview, 2013.
101 Iba, Interview, 2013.
102 Iba, Interview, 2013.
103 Amani, Interview, 2013.
104 Fadwa, Interview, 2013.
105 Ghadir, Interview, 2013.
106 Iba, Interview, 2013.
7.3 Social rights

Regarding the social issues the women’s primary concerns are about their family. They often think about their children and their future, but also their relationship towards their husbands. Hafa who has been able to start working as a hairdresser at home also implies that it could have given her more freedom than she enjoys today. Her friends in church encourage her to take her freedom and work outside the home but her husband does not agree. The relationship to her husband is also affecting the things she is able to do in other areas. She tried to continue her education later in life but since she got married she had to stop.

I tried and I went to literacy class after that and I succeeded but after that I got married and I was 18 years old so I couldn’t continued […] he didn’t like me to continue […] I got very upset, but I couldn’t do anything it was out of my hands.

When she expresses her views of freedom it is in relation to not being hindered by anyone and being able to move freely without the restrictions. The women also mention how they experience their upbringing and what effect it has had in their lives today. Amani did feel freedom during her upbringing and she had no problems being outside, although she also expresses the fear of not doing what her parents told her.

The parents are very afraid for the girls to be outside before late time so she is getting afraid all the time a kind of fear of ohh I will upset my mom and dad. She feels secure through her marriage which she states make her stronger as a woman. Hafa also explains her upbringing to include restrictions about being outside; this made her feel different from her friends. Because she helped her father in his shop as a child she had also experienced not having lived her childhood fully. She felt that she needed to take responsibility in an early stage and this made her miss out of her childhood. Cala also expresses her childhood as troublesome and expresses to feel captured. She states, ‘we were two children and five brothers so we felt captured a bit ahh so ehh so I had pressure […] pressure from my brothers and from my father from the family pressure…’

The women express the surroundings to be somewhat troubling. Ghadir who experienced her childhood as safe and secure does feel that the society today makes her feel hindered to move around.

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107 Fadwa, Interview, 2013.
108 Hafa, Interview, 2013.
109 Hafa, Interview, 2013.
110 Amani, Interview, 2013.
111 Amani, Interview, 2013.
112 Hafa, Interview, 2013.
113 Cala, Interview, 2013.
I suffering from the harassment from the street from the youth I suffering from taking the ahh ahh transportation by my own I cannot be alone in the street at night.\textsuperscript{114} She expresses that the society has changed and the pressure towards women to stay at home has increased.

Before we used as girls to go and to work and we go out and come back, but now ehh sometimes when you feel even that you can work you cannot work, and he putting some pressure that he needs all the ladies to put [...] The community, the society and the government and the all, they are pushing all the girls and all the women.\textsuperscript{115}

Ghadir continues to express that she experiences freedom at home but if she would like to go out she has to have permission of her husband. Freedom, she argues, is something that could be used in the wrong way and she is happy with the amount of freedom that she has.\textsuperscript{116} Iba also continues to explain freedom as something that has to be handled with maturity. She makes the following example, ‘for example I see girls that they are wearing ahh that they are wearing clothes that are not very suitable and they say this is freedom...’\textsuperscript{117} Amani feels that her duty is to take care of her family. She also explains that she has no problem taking her rights against her husband. In her past she had to take her rights in her father’s home when they discussed the heritage. Amani also mentions a women’s group that she values highly. She feels that they are able to support her in everyday life. It is a place of support but also a place to discuss problems and life regarding family.

Sometimes I you know laugh with them in a way I got tired I call my home and my kitchen is the restaurant so I tell them that the restaurant never stops never close until nine... if I get angry or get upset or lose my temper I will come to you I talk to my friend, so the friend told me no you will come to me as a friend and we will love each other but never to get away from your husband or to get away from your responsibilities or to get away from you home.\textsuperscript{118}

Cala feels that the most important thing in her life today is her children. She thinks that women and men should be treated the same but she also explains that she does not have the same freedom to move around as she had when her husband was alive. Now she has to ask her brother and brother-in-law for permission. She also relates the word freedom with being able to move around freely. Her plans for the future are related to her children’s development. She expresses that it would give her value as a woman if her children would be able to succeed with their education.

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\textsuperscript{114} Ghadir, Interview, 2013.
\textsuperscript{115} Ghadir, Interview, 2013.
\textsuperscript{116} Ghadir, Interview, 2013.
\textsuperscript{117} Iba, Interview, 2013.
\textsuperscript{118} Amani, Interview, 2013.
\end{flushright}
The education for my children and to finish for them the education, because I’m a woman and it would be like a feast for me when my children finish the education, I would love to see the growing up and to see them something different.119

Badra is living with her children which creates a lot of hinders in her life. She has not the freedom to move around due to her responsibility over the family. Her way of valuing freedom is expressed through her way of raising her children today.

I have one daughter, she is married and I gave her all the freedom to choose her what she wants. [...] Because this is a lesson that she learned from her life that she has to give her children a kind of freedom.120

Dahab has, as mentioned in the previous section, been able to start working which has made her feel different in life. She feels happy to be able to contribute but also to do something else in life besides dealing with her family. Although when she has to put those things in relation to each other her answer is direct and clear of what she experiences as most important, ‘No it is not work that is the most important thing but the children and the home is most important...’121 Her plans and dreams for the future appear not to be relevant if she is not able to deal with the obligations at home. Dahab expresses that, ‘I would love to go back to school but she cannot how I’m going to do this for my home and my children and in my work...’122 Fadwa also expresses that she feels hindered because of her responsibilities that are put on her. To help her children and give them the opportunity to complete their education is her focus but for that to happen she has to endure things that she does not want to do.

I do not feeling relaxed, I do not feeling relaxed and happy staying with my mother-in-law but I try to bear this and to push myself to stay there in order to make my husband and my children happy.123

When the women reason about their future they often exclude themselves and bring up their thoughts about their children. The education is in focus and to give the children the freedom to choose what they would like to do is expressed as important. Hafa makes a clear point that she wants to give her children the freedom to possess their own development. She draws this conclusion from her own upbringing and the things she was not able to do.

I wish and I dream to let my children better than me that the thing that I lack in my life, not to have them in their life, to help them to reach a good level [...] That I don’t like see

119 Cala, Interview, 2013.
120 Badra, Interview, 2013.
121 Dahab, Interview, 2013.
122 Dahab, Interview, 2013.
123 Fadwa, Interview, 2013.
my child noting controlling them except their minds [...] If they like to continue she would love them to continue the education.  

Cala who is a widow puts a lot of value in her children and their success in life. To see her children succeed seems to be an expression of those things she feels hindered in. As explained before her freedom is limited to her brother and brother-in-law and when she talks about her children’s success it is her brothers and the surroundings that she wants to prove something for.

I would love to see them educated and growing up and good men because people are talking allot about them, my brothers are good people they are working in good positions in factories [...] so I would love to see my son like my brothers taking good position in the community or in the society after that they, my brothers they didn’t continue the education so I would love to see my son continuing the education and to be even better than my brothers.  

7.4 Cultural rights

As the women express their views of how the culture is affecting their lives it is often in terms of being hindered or being free. During their upbringing a critical aspect of what they were allowed to do dependent very much on ‘the Upper Egypt mentality’ or ‘oriental mentality.’ Badra had not the chance of being educated which she sees is due to her parents’ cultural thinking of educating girls. Iba states that the oriental minded views of her parents were the reason for them to tell her to quit her education and get engaged. She says, ‘because they are coming from an Upper Egypt minded, oriental minded and they are all girls so they wants to finish with them all of them marry men...’ When she was asked to further explain the oriental mind she continues to describe a fear that she felt was planted inside of her. She had become afraid of the surroundings and to go out by herself. Although she expressed to be hindered in some way because the oriental thinking she also expresses her views of freedom and that girls should take their parents’ views into consideration.

Cala experienced her childhood as a time where she felt captured. She had the pressure from her parents and from her brothers to act in a certain way. She explains, ‘so there was a pressure on me while I grew up in order to make them them to make us growing up correctly...’ This is something that still affects her today and when she expresses the hinders for her to get a job the main thing is her brothers cultural thinking, ‘they are from an Upper Egypt minded background

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124 Hafa, Interview, 2013.
125 Cala, Interview, 2013.
126 Badra, Interview, 2013.
127 Iba, Interview, 2013.
128 Iba, Interview, 2013.
129 Cala Interview, 2013.
so they her brother, she has allot of brothers they don’t agree for her to and work... The way Hafa expressed her husband’s reasons for not letting her work outside home is also the Upper Egypt mentality. When she is asked to explain further what the oriental mind is about she is expressing that some areas are okay to do but others are forbidden. To participate in her church activities is all right but as she mentioned before her chances of working outside home are limited. She tried to change her husband’s mind but he maintained that she could only work at home.

The women`s relation to their God has a great impact on how they perceive their everyday lives. As Amani reflects over what she feels is most important in life she says, ‘the important things is the love of God to me, number two my husband and my children number three...’ They express both the feeling of being supported but also to rely on that God is helping them in the future. Some of them express that it is out of their control to affect how their everyday lives will become. God is often related to the future and the importance of his role to change things. Badra views her part in changing Egypt through praying and hoping God to interfere. She states, ‘I don’t have anything that I can do except to pray, I cannot do it by myself but I pray and he can solve it...’ After she had expressed things she lacked during her upbringing she ends it with,

Of course God now is compensating us or compensating me for everything that even that if we would like or to think about it he is compensating and he is fulfilling our life by the spirit.

Amani expresses that to be able to plan for her future she also needs to include God. She sees his role as important and he is the one giving her the money that she can distribute. When Fadwa is asked for her perspective of the future she states she has no chance of planning for her future but she has to rely on God to contribute for her.

I cannot plan I cannot plan by my own but I’m saying God who is he is the only one who can ehh ehh give me those things but I cannot from when?

When Hafa wanted to attend the hairdresser course her husband refused, her natural response is to pray and she felt that it was the reason that he changed his mind.

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130 Cala, Interview, 2013.  
131 Hafa, Interview, 2013.  
132 Amani, Interview, 2013.  
133 Badra, Interview, 2013.  
134 Badra, Interview, 2013.  
135 Amani, Interview, 2013.  
136 Fadwa, Interview, 2013.
In the beginning when I wanted to learn hairdressing, he objected completely, and then I pray to God and he change him and he agreed after that that I can work at home at home, she is working at home, so she is working as a hairdresser at her home.  

Cala says she feels pressure from the surrounding because she is a widow and her way of dealing with these problems is to be with God. She expresses, ‘I’m working with God and I God is the only one that sees me so I don’t care about the other...’ During Ghadir’s upbringing God played a major role because the loss of her father. Her mother was committed to God and she learned how to depend only on God and not the surrounding. She tells that her mother refused to receive support from the surroundings; she wanted God to provide for all their needs.

Church also has an important part in the women’s lives where they both feel strengthened and supported in their everyday lives. Cala expresses that she has become aware of the values a woman can have. She says that the way church has worked with these things has made it possible for women to be what they would like to be in the society. Church is also an important place for Amani through which she can participate in the society. She attends a women’s group where she finds support but also a place where she can express herself and the problems in her life.

If I have a problem I go and run to them and pray with me and there are exams for my children please pray with me for the children, and then when she doesn’t go they call and her all the time on the mobile they love her very much if they are their daughter.

When bringing up areas where the women feel discriminated, some of the women express that the society is treating them differently because of their belief. Badra expresses the feeling of being treated as different, ‘they look at us differently, because we are not the same religion like...’ Ghadir has experienced the same discrimination and she feels like being treated as second class citizen. She even feels like they are no longer treating her as part of the same country, ‘they are the Arab people and they are foreigners...’

8 Discussion

In the following section the research question number two will be answered and RBA will be put in relation to the empirical material presented in the result section. It also contains a conclusion of the relation between the perspective and the empirical result.

137 Hafa, Interview, 2013.
138 Cala, Interview, 2013.
139 Ghadir, Interview, 2013.
140 Cala, Interview, 2013.
141 Amani, Interview, 2013.
142 Badra, Interview, 2013.
143 Ghadir, Interview, 2013.
8.1 RBA in perspective of their life stories

The following section will raise the Egyptian women’s experience in relation to RBA. It is done to create a deeper understanding of their answers and the relation to Human Rights.

8.1.1 The accountability of rights

According to RBA to ensure the rights that the women have there must be someone that has the accountability to provide for them. There are areas where the women express to feel hindered and are not able to claim their rights. For example work, education, self-determination, being able to move freely etc. As they further reason their thoughts on who should ensure these are limited. Often they have no thoughts or they argue that God has the responsibility to provide. The way of thinking in terms of civil – state relationship was not brought up during the interviews. Often when they reflect over their rights their natural response is the relation to their husbands. Hafa expressed that when she wanted to start to learn the profession of a hairdresser her husband objected at first. She turns to prayer and later on he changed his mind. She expresses that for her to get the right to work she is dependent on both her husband to allow her and for God to provide. Because the state does not provide with opportunities Hafa becomes dependent on her husband, her self-determination is delimited to her husband’s values which make it hard for her to be in control of her own development. Cala has similar experience where her brother and brother-in-law are the ones deciding if she is allowed to work or not. It is also clear that the Egyptian state has not provided with opportunities for the women to act upon their rights. Neither made the women aware of what rights they have or how to claim them which is a foundation in RBA.

Often does the natural stance towards God and family make it hard for them to see the relation between someone giving them their rights and their way of taking their rights. You could argue that they have some thoughts about the accountability through their participation in the election, but at the same time they express the feeling of not affecting anything by voting. Amani expressed during her interview that she is able to take her right in her home and that her husband has no problem letting her express herself. She argues to have an upbringing where she was free, she expresses to have taken her rights in her father’s home in the issue of heritage. As she had an awareness of how to claim her rights she also is able to act upon them. Apart from Amani the women express what they are lacking in life but often find it hard to argue for whom will ensure their rights. Some of the women also express problems which can be related to that the state is violating their rights. Ghadir expresses her doubt on the state to ensure her rights through the example of how the police are acting. Amani feels that the state is discriminating her as a woman.
through legislation. They also express to feel unsecure to move around and participate in the society. As the state has the responsibility to ensure circumstances which enable the women to claim their rights, the security is also an area where the women’s rights are being violated. One aspect of their expressed experience is the relation to God. As the women express their worries and needs they often put it in relation to God. It seems as this is a contribution towards their lack of knowledge about the relation between the citizen and the state as accountability emphasises. It can also be seen as an expression of despair whereas there is no one other than God who is helping them. Ghadir is trying to act upon her right for education and to start working but because she has to provide with the resources by her own it is hindering her.

A lack of accountability in the women’s lives is shown through their incapacity to decide over their lives. They express not having been given the opportunity to develop through education or work. According to them it is both because they are being hindered as the case of education or do not have the opportunity as in work.

**8.1.2 Being empowered**

An important aspect within RBA is to empower the right-holders. Empowerment is to enable those concerned with the knowledge of rights but also to make them gain and keep control of their development. As mentioned before the women often express a will of participating in various areas but they are not able to do so. Those who have been able to participate also expressed an important insight which can enable empowerment. To be empowered the women need to know how and what they are able to do. Often they express to be at home and their duties regarding the family are hindering them to participate in other areas. Badra who tried to start working after her husband’s death both expresses the lack of education and the responsibilities over the family as reasons for hinder. She also states not being able to move freely because of her obligations. You could say that she expresses not to be in control of her development because of her circumstances. Amani states to have been able to move freely during her upbringing and has no problems with taking her rights towards her husband. Although she also feels a frustration not being able to start working and contribute to the duties needed financially. She also states that her responsibility is with her family. So there is not only a matter of having the freedom to ensuring your rights, you also have to get empowered to be able to explore those rights. In the women’s lives empowerment would include the opportunity to participation outside their regular duties. Ghadir tries to work as much as she can besides her responsibilities in the family to start at the university again. She tries to take control over her situation but also expresses it as hard since her obligations are hindering her. Badra also expresses her will to take control of her situation but because her lack of education and the family situation
she cannot. The women often get in between these desires, to be at home and do the duties for their family, or to participate in the society and be able to contribute and perhaps also develop in other ways. One area which the women have expressed as important to enable empowerment is education. The women reason around the fact that if they would have the opportunity to participate in the society, it would have enabled them to be more independent. To empower these women seems to include the challenge of structures within the society which excludes these women.

The opportunity for Dahab who got the chance to start working and feeling empowered did not come because she had a longing for independence but because her husband no longer could work. The fact that she also, even if she felt better and has got a chance to change the power structures at home, valued the family more than work makes the concept of empowerment difficult. Amani also expresses the family and marriage to empower her, she expressed that during her upbringing she was afraid but now she feels stronger as a woman. As mentioned before the revolution that happened in 2011 has made the women more aware of how they can participate in the society. The elections did make several of the women able to participate in the society and their expressed views testify of a development that has occurred in their views of themselves and the society. Although it seems that they are not taking their participation further than voting. The empowerment is in a way limited to specific events, and does not enable it for them to keep control of their rights.

You could discuss if the obligations that the women have, either if they choose to act upon them or not, are hindering them from the concept of empowerment. The RBA is founded in the concepts of rights for individuals, but what if these rights do not match the structure of the development thinking? Although Dahab expressed the work is not as important as the family duties the fact that several of the women expressed a will of change but no thoughts of how to do it makes the concept of empowerment relevant in their everyday lives. Empowerment is about gaining and keeping control of your own development, some of the women try to gain and keep control of their development but there are factors which discriminate them in order to get empowered. That empowerment and accountability are acting together is an important aspect whereas it seems as one cannot enable development by its own. Discrimination which also is a concept taken in to consideration in RBA has been expressed through several of the women. It can include their family but also the surrounding. Some of the women also experienced a change in the surroundings which has made it more difficult for women. Ghadir experiences harassment and pressure from the society towards her as a woman which has made her feel hindered to
participate. Other areas where they feel discriminated in are against their religion. Badra expresses being looked at differently by the surroundings and Ghadir feels being treated as a second class citizen.

Being able to participate in the society is expressed as important in RBA. To empower someone they also need to have the opportunity to participate in those activities which can empower them. It is also something that the women express both to be difficult but also something that they value. Participation is in RBA a key factor to create development for the individual through informing them with the right information and including them in the process. Their freedom to be able to participate outside their homes is hindered in several ways and can include both their relation to the family but also the relation to the surrounding society. Those that have been able to start working expressed a change in participating in the society and to be able to create a social contact outside the family. They have also expressed a change in the feeling of themselves and to have the opportunity to affect things in their homes. Their participation in other areas outside their regular duties has created a wider chance of deciding things which also creates self-reliance. To participate in other events has also been expressed as important. Amani expressed several times the importance of the women’s group she participates in and the affect it has on her life today. She is able to discuss things regarding her family but also find strength and security. Several of the women express the event of being able to vote and participate in the election as an experience of being important. Dahab expresses her participation in the elections as a feeling of being a human. Even if they feel and express the importance of voting some of them cannot see the relation between their participation and being a part of change. Dahab was one of the two women which had the opportunity to start working. Her participation in the labour market made her both able to contribute towards the family financial duties but also to get more power in the household. This makes her feel more in charge and able to decide at home. But it was not until she started to participate in the duties outside her home that her voice started to be taken in to account. Cala states that because of her participation in church she has a longing for equality between women and men; she also states not having the chance of expressing it through work or moving around freely.

To be included and being able to participate has created awareness and empowered some of the women. Amani expresses that revolution has made women want to participate in the discussions. To be able to include these women in a development project their participation is necessary. The women express the difficulties in being able to participate outside their duties at home but also realising their role in participation could mean an obstacle. The fact that most of the women are
not able to participate in the community makes the aspect of including them to participate in the process important but also difficult. They often express an exclusion from for example education as a major hindering factor today. It creates a negative spiral which can be broken if they would have the chance of participating and become empowered.

8.2 Conclusions

To put the women’s experience of Human Rights in relation to RBA did outline some areas where rights were expressed as violated. As they expressed a will to change their situation but no opportunity for it to happen makes the role of the duty-bearer important. The women’s thoughts on how or what will change their situation are often through work, education or God.

To empower them with information or opportunity to change their situation does not automatically make them gain control of their development. Other factors come into play such as culture and family. According to RBA, to give the opportunity for empowerment does not only include writing policy documents but also breaking exclusion. It includes for the state to break with social norms in the society which are hard to change. They didn’t have the chance to be educated or participate in the society and therefore are the opportunities to claim their rights minor. Exclusion seems to be multidimensional and therefore the right-holders ownership of their development vital. To empower Hafa may not be the same as empower Amani.

Even if the women express a longing for some of their rights the way of viewing the individual as owner of her rights sometimes seems unfamiliar for them. It appears as the women lack both accountability from the state and empowerment to act upon their rights. Hafa is after all an example where she expresses a will to participate in the society through her work. Although the surroundings work against her will of claiming her rights made her able to start working. Her expression will stand as foundation for RBA, ‘not only financial resource for me but I found myself...’ To give the right-holder ownership over their development can create sustainable development.

9 Final comment

Ensuring Human Rights at local level is stated by RBA to be done through accountability from the duty-bearers and empowerment of the right-holders. During this research the experience of how Egyptian women living in poverty perceive Human Rights has been explored. The duty-bearers responsibility has been outlined as vital as these women have not been able to participate in areas which can empower them. For the women to ensure those rights that they express as important the concept of empowerment is needed. It has also been raised that empowerment
includes challenging structures in the society which are discriminating. Looking at the situation of the right-holders through RBA can raise important aspects which hinder them to be owners of their development.

For further studies a comparison between right-holders participating in a project which serves to empower them and right-holders that are non-participants would be of interest. It would bring forth patterns which could create a deeper understanding of empowerment and RBA. To analyse the perspective of duty-bearers would also be of interest. To examine the views of those in charge could enable a deeper understanding of how rights could be accounted for.
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Interviewee

Amani, *Interview*, Cairo, 1 April 2013.

Badra, *Interview*, Cairo, 1 April 2013.

Cala, *Interview*, Cairo, 2 April 2013.


Appendix 1
Map over Egypt.

(Source: Landguiden, Egypten, Geografi Utrikespolitiska Institutet, 2013b, 27 May 2013
http://www.landguiden.se/~media/Images/Kartor/Egypten.ashx)
Appendix 2

Instructions for interviews

Purpose for the interview is to talk about how women in Egypt perceive their rights in everyday life. It will be used in a research for the University in Jönköping, Sweden.

Rights can include the right to work, study, or minor things as being able to choose and plan things by their own, go to places without permission from others etc. Rights can include a variety of things and may differ from individual to individual and therefore are the interviews mainly about how they explain a “normal” day and what kinds of obstacles it can contain. We will also try to talk about issues that are bigger such as “are you happy about your everyday life” and “explain if you have some dreams about your life”.

The interviews will also be based on three different categories. How they perceive their background, their present (everyday life) and the future (dreams and hopes). Within these categories are different questions which purpose is to explore their perspective. The questions are a frame for the interview though the basic strive is to create a confident conversation where we together can talk about these issues.
Appendix 3
Interview guide

The interview guide will be divided in three sections: past, present and future. It will try to touch several interfaces in which the final report is to explore. The interfaces are: Rights, development, participation at different areas, accountability of rights and development, equality in development, non-discrimination and empowerment. But also four thematic areas: **Economic, social, cultural and political rights.**

**Introduction**

Will start off with explaining who I am and what I do. Family and a little about everyday life. (Do counter questions.)

This is a part of an assignment that my teacher gave me, so the interviews will be a part of that assignment. If you would like, you can be anonymous, would you like to be that?

I would like to listen to your everyday life, how you spend your days, what makes you happy and sad, but also how you think about things that are important in your life and if you feel that you have some rights in the society.

There are no right or wrong answers, you can feel free and take your time thinking about what you are going to answer. You can also stop the interview whenever you like.

Name, age, area of accommodation, source of income, family situation.

**Theme: past**

1. Can you tell me about you background? (place of birth, family background, upbringing)

2. Please tell me how you experience your childhood?

3. What was most important to you when grew up as a young girl?

4. What was it that you felt lacking the most when you grew up?

5. What were your dreams when you grew up?

What were the obstacles in order to reach them?

6. How much freedom did you have to choose what you wanted to be when you grew up?
If not, did you have the opportunity to change the situation, or how can change the situation?

7. Have there been times when it was easier to be a woman?

How was it easy? What was easy?

**Theme: present**

8. Tell me how your everyday looks? From when you wake up until you go to bed in the evening?

Is there anything that is harder to do in your everyday?

Is there anything you can do to change this? How?

9. What are the most important things in your life?

What other things is important for you?

10. What prevents you from these things to day?

11. What are the most important problems for you in everyday life?

- What is needed to overcome these problems?

12. What are missing in your life at this presents?

- Who will help you ensure these things?

13. Who in your surroundings are showing you most respect?

14. Who have made you feel that you have great value as a woman.

15. What would you like to change in your life?

Who´s responsibility is it to change these things?

16. What does freedom mean to you?

17. If you had more freedom in your life, in what areas would it be in?

- What needs to be done to give you that freedom?

18. How do you participate in the community?

- How do you affect things in the community?
19. In what areas in the community do you feel discriminated against by?

20. Outside your home and your family, what kinds of activities are you able to pursue on your own? Meeting friends? Shopping? Travel?

21. What kinds of things can you decide about in everyday life?

22. What makes you happy?

23. What makes you sad?

**Theme future**

24. Please tell me how you look at your own future?

25. What are the most important things for you in the future?

26. Is there anything that feels impossible to change?

27. If you could decide how your future would look like, how would it look?

   What is needed to achieve it?

28. How do you plan your future?

   What kind of things are you planning?

29. What would you like to see changing in the future? (In your family, areas you live in, society, in the world.)

   How can you be part of that change?

**Ending**

28. Is there anything you would like to add?

   Or anything that you are wondering about?