TALKING THE TALK, WHAT
ABOUT WALKING THE WALK?

- INVESTIGATION OF BARRIERS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER EQUALITY
  POLICIES IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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MAY 2015

This thesis is submitted for obtaining the Master’s Degree in International Humanitarian Action. By submitting the thesis, the author certifies that the text is from his/her hand, does not include the work of someone else unless clearly indicated, and that the thesis has been produced in accordance with proper academic practices.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the possible barriers to why the implementation of gender equality policies in the everyday activities on the ground of humanitarian action is not evident in practice. To investigate this arena, in-depth interviews were conducted with gender advisors of humanitarian organisations. The data was analysed using thematic analysis through the lens of the theoretical framework of systems theory and the concept of `knowledge into practice’.

The findings indicate that there are three types of barriers on three dimensions for the implementation of gender equality policies on the ground of humanitarian action. The first barrier is the lack of external and internal pressure on the humanitarian community in form of accountability mechanisms. The second barrier is the internal structure of the humanitarian community with internal difficulties to integrate the gender community as well as fragmentation within it. The third barrier is the lack of a suitable semantic as well as operational understanding of the concept of gender within humanitarian action.

This thesis highlights the importance of a common language and receptive attitudes between humanitarian actors for the practical implementation of gender equality policies.

Key words: gender equality, gender equality policies, gender equality programming, knowledge transmission, knowledge implementation, barriers, humanitarian action.
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ACCRONYMS

ECHO The European Commission's Humanitarian aid and Civil Protection Department
GBV Gender Based Violence
GenCap Gender Standby Capacity Project
IASC Inter-Agency Standing Committee
KIP Knowledge into Practice
NGOs Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RCRCM Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
SADD Sex and Age Disaggregated Data
SIDA Swedish International Cooperation Agency
UN United Nations
UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN OCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WFP World Food Program
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
In 1995, the fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing. This landmark figures until today as the most important of the World Conferences due to the fact that it introduced the concept of gender equality and the strategy of gender mainstreaming to the global development agenda (Dakkak, Eklund, & Tellier, 2007; Eklund & Tellier, 2012; Mazurana, Benelli, Gupta, & Walker, 2011; United Nations, 1996). The result of the Beijing Conference was the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action which the 189 governments attending the Conference unanimously adopted (United Nations, 1996, p. 68). Ever since the Beijing Platform for Action the international community has been mandated to mainstream gender equality into its work (Eklund & Tellier, 2012, p. 589).

Later the same year as the Beijing Conference acknowledged the importance to incorporate gender equality in all areas of development, Bridget Byrne and Sally Baden wrote one of the first articles on the dimension of gender equality in humanitarian action. In their article they state that there is a “growing international consensus on the need to consider gender issues in emergencies and humanitarian assistance.” (Byrne & Baden, 1995, p. i) but that the “the integration of gender concerns into thinking and practice in humanitarian assistance is only just beginning” (Byrne & Baden, 1995, p. 3).

2015 marks 20 years since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing which introduced gender mainstreaming and gender equality into the global development agenda. During the span of 2015 the issues raised during the conference will be discussed throughout the development and humanitarian world. This thesis is therefore not written in a vacuum, unattached to the ongoing development of the humanitarian field, but is written in a time of discussion and commitments to advancing gender equality.
1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM
There are few agencies today, if any, which do not have some sort of gender equality policy or programming in place (Zaatari, 2014, p. 6). The importance for organisations to integrate gender equality into their programs and projects is highlighted by several humanitarian actors.¹ This development of gender related issues in the field of humanitarian action has resulted in numerous gender equality policies, guidelines, trainings, inter-agency work and policy statements which ensure and encourage the advancement of gender equality in humanitarian action.

Thus, the humanitarian community today is full of commitments to the integration of gender equality into every aspect of its work. However, it seems as these commitments often do not get transmitted and implemented into practice (Dakkak et al., 2007; Eklund & Tellier, 2012; Mazurana et al., 2011; Zaatari, 2014). There is a gap between what the humanitarian community is saying about gender equality and their actual work on gender equality, i.e. a gap between words and evidence on the ground.

The problem identified for this thesis is that on one hand the humanitarian community knows about the value to implement gender equality policies on the ground through gender equality programming and it does not hesitate to talk loudly about this knowledge. On the other hand though, the humanitarian community fails to follow through on the commitments made to gender equality and actually implement the knowledge it has on gender equality in humanitarian action. In other words the humanitarian community is “talking the talk” but are ineffective at influencing those who are “walking the walk” on gender equality in humanitarian action. In this thesis I focus on the reasons to why the implementation of gender equality policies is not evident in practice, namely the barriers to the implementation of gender equality policies on the ground.

1.3 THE AIM
The aim of this thesis is to investigate the possible barriers as perceived by persons with gender as their work task² as to why the implementation of gender equality policies in the everyday activities on the ground of humanitarian action is not evident in practice.

1.4 RATIONALE
The relevance of this research topic for the humanitarian community situates itself in a time of current discussions in the humanitarian community on gender equality and the ever-growing importance of effectiveness in humanitarian programming.³

The necessity of gender equality throughout the humanitarian program cycle is argued through its linkage to the effectiveness of humanitarian response (IASC, 2006, p. i; Olivius, 2014, p. 80). No humanitarian emergency is gender neutral⁴ and for humanitarian actors to be able to address the most affected people, they need to consider how a specific crisis has affected different segments of the population. To be able to determine this a gender equality programming needs to be adapted with the use of the proper tools available (IASC, 2006). It is therefore important to investigate the implementation of gender equality approaches since it has begun to play such an important role in the effectiveness in humanitarian action.⁵

There are numerous evidence based arguments to why the mainstreaming gender equality in humanitarian action is important and not only for the effectiveness of the

² They are referred to as “gender experts”, “gender advisors”, “gender officers” etc. by humanitarian actors. For the purpose of the neutrality of this thesis I refer to them as persons with gender as their work task.


⁵ For example, one of the themes of the World Humanitarian Summit is effectiveness. See more at the World Humanitarian Summit’s website http://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/ [accessed May 7 2015].
relief aid but also for the affected communities, e.g. humanitarian crisis can result in a change of gender roles. However, it is less amount of research conducted which tackle the problems that gender equality policies face in the implementation phase, and which ask the question why the implementation is not evident in practice if we know that mainstreaming gender equality is desirable for everyone? As Hilde van Dijkhorst and Suzette Vonhof wrote in 2005 “although for instance gender and conflict has received much attention, the incorporation of gender as part and parcel of relief interventions has not yet really come of the ground.” (Dijkhorst & Vonhof, 2005, p. 34) My research topic therefore tackles a gap in the research on gender equality which needs to be addressed, as one of my participants said “your thesis comes in a very, very critical time” (P2).

1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTION
The problem identified for this thesis is the problem that the humanitarian community today is “talking the talk” but are not “walking the walk” when it comes to the commitments made towards gender equality expressed in organisations’ gender equality policies. There seems as if there are barriers to either i) transmit the knowledge on gender equality found in e.g. gender equality policies: to transmit the “talk to walk”, ii) to implement that knowledge: to “walk the talk” or both of them. To be able to tackle this problem a research question has been formulated and three sub-questions. The research question is:

Why according to persons with gender as their work task is knowledge about gender equality in humanitarian action not transmitted to and/or implemented into practice despite the presence of corresponding policies and programming?

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1.5.1 **SUB-QUESTIONS**

These following sub-questions are formulated to answer the research question. They were carefully chosen from extensive literature review, from meetings with researchers and practitioners as well as attending classes on the topic.

- What are the perceived barriers for implementing gender equality policies in the everyday activities on the ground?
- How does the humanitarian community perceive gender?
- What role do staff related factors play in the transmission and implementation of policy into practice?

1.5.2 **LIMITATIONS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This thesis departs from the idea that gender equality policies and programming are needed in the humanitarian sector. Second, this thesis is not a platform to compare different organisations’ gender equality policies or programming. It is not my intention to judge which organisation’s policy or programming is better than the other. My intention is to critically analyse and explore the barriers to implementing gender equality in the daily activities on the ground.

1.6 **TERMINOLOGY**

The humanitarian community or humanitarian actors in this thesis refers to a range of actors: United Nations (UN) agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (RCRCM) etc. The term “humanitarian action” refers to different expressions, as humanitarian aid, relief response etc. Additionally, the terms “policies” and “programming” are used interchangeably but should not be considered as the same thing: programming is the action (knowledge implementation) of the policies (knowledge transmission). I use them interchangeably because the implementation of gender equality policies is done by gender equality programming, i.e. through transmission comes implementation.

Last, in the research question knowledge transmission and knowledge implementation are mentioned. This thesis follows the understanding that they are two different things but interconnected. Knowledge transmission is the act of transmitting knowledge from
one person to another. Knowledge implementation is the act of implementing that knowledge transmitted into practice. As mentioned above, gender equality programming is based on knowledge implementation while gender equality policies are a form of knowledge transmission.

1.7 THESIS OUTLINE
The introduction has stated why the research topic on barriers to implement gender equality is relevant for the field of humanitarian action. The second chapter discusses the definition of gender used in this thesis. The third chapter presents the key research previously conducted on gender equality policies and implementation as well as how this thesis will contribute to that research field. The fourth chapter presents the theoretical framework and how it will be used in the discussion. The fifth chapter introduces the method used for data gathering and data analysis. The sixth chapter is the empirical chapter presenting the findings of the research. Following the findings is the seventh chapter which discusses the findings in relation to the research question while applying the theoretical framework. The last chapter summarises the findings and the discussion of this thesis.
2 DEFINITION OF GENDER

2.1 A CONTESTED CONCEPT
A majority of gender equality policies begin with a clarification between sex and gender, and try to answer the question what gender is, and what gender is not. Despite countless efforts from researchers and various humanitarian actors gender remains a contested concept.

Concepts carry assumptions of agreements between two parties as to how to use them; however, for some concepts these assumptions cannot be made (Gallie, 1955, pp. 167–168). These concepts are called essentially contested concepts since we cannot agree on the assumptions of them: “as we examine the different uses of these terms and the characteristic arguments in which they figure we soon see that there is no one clearly definable general use of any of them which can be set up as the correct or standard use.” (Gallie, 1955, p. 168)

“Gender” is a contested concept since it has different meanings for different parties. The definitions of two major humanitarian actors serve as an example. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s (IASC) definition compared to the European Commission’s Humanitarian aid and Civil Protection Department’s (ECHO) definition. The IASC defines gender in following way:

“Gender refers to the social differences between females and males throughout the life cycle that are learned, and though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time, and have wide variations both within and between cultures. ‘Gender’, along with class and race, determines the roles, power and resources for females and males in any culture.” (IASC, 2008, p. 7)

The IASC’s definition limits gender exclusively to women and men and thus excludes other expressions of gender. The ECHO’s definition which builds on IASC’s definition adds lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons into the definition of gender:
“While acknowledging that, worldwide, gender discrimination particularly affects women and girls, the Commission supports a broad understanding of gender, which does not only focus on women and girls but also takes into account the different needs of men and boys. The needs of other gender-related groups, such as lesbians and gay, bisexual transgender or intersex persons, should also be recognized.” (ECHO, 2013, p. 3)

2.2 ACADEMIC DISCUSSION OF THE DEFINITION OF GENDER

As shown, these two humanitarian actors are not consistent in their understanding of gender. Since gender is a contested concept a further academic discussion on the definition of is relevant.

2.2.1 SEX AND GENDER, BIOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Ann Oakley distinguish gender and sex clearly, when she states “‘sex’ is a biological term: ‘gender’ a psychological and cultural one” (Oakley, 2015, p. 115). Therefore, if the proper terms for sex are ‘female’ and ‘male’, then the proper terms for gender are ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ (Oakley, 2015, p. 116). However, people tend to understand the interconnection between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ only in two ways: female sex (sex) corresponds to feminine (gender), and male sex (sex) corresponds to masculine (gender) (Oakley, 2015, p. 115). Therefore, gender is often understood as the amount of femininity and masculinity found in one person (Oakley, 2015, p. 116). However as Oakley describes it, much more things, such as “function of dress, gesture, occupation, social network and personality” interrelate in the gender distinction than the fact of only possessing a particular set of genitals (Oakley, 2015, p. 115).

For Raewyn Connell, gender is something that everyday life takes for granted “we instantly recognise a person as a man or woman, girl or boy” (Connell, 2010, p. 5). For example, a new born child is not only directly classified as a boy or a girl but it is also assigned a gender (Oakley, 2015, p. 125). From this distinction people arrange their everyday business, as women, men, girls or boys and it seems as these arrangements are so familiar “that they can seem part of the order of nature” (Connell, 2010, p. 5). This belief that gender distinction is “natural”, that femininity must be attached to the female sex, and masculinity must be attached to the male sex, is what causes behaviour, attitudes and appearances that do not conform with this pattern to appear scandalous.
(Connell, 2010, p. 5). As an example: transgender persons who do not make the connection between their gender identity\(^7\) and their biological sex, or women who act and appear with masculine attitudes or behaviour and vice versa, men acting with feminine characteristics (Connell, 1987, p. 6).

### 2.2.2 Gender a social construction for social structure

To be a woman or a man is not a pre-determined state, i.e. people are not born with the social characteristics of either a woman or a man, but it is something that someone becomes: to become a woman or man is “a condition actively under construction” (Connell, 2010, p. 5). Womanhood or manhood are actively constructed by social norms or pressure from authorities (Connell, 2010, p. 6). This construction of gender is a way for people to structure themselves within the society, and many do so willingly, whereas other struggle to conform to the rigid roles provided by the society (Connell, 2010, pp. 6, 10). As such gender is “at the same time, sources of pleasure, recognition and identity, and sources of injustice and harm” (Connell, 2010, p. 7). Thus, it is not an expression of biology, not a fixed dichotomy in human life or character. It is a pattern in our social arrangements, everyday activities and practices which it governs. (Connell, 2010, p. 10)

### 2.2.3 The inclusiveness of gender

While writing on the definition of gender it is easy to fall into the pitfall of men and women. Gender as a term however, is much more than that, as Connell argues: there is no such thing as two distinct definitions, human character cannot be divided into two realms (Connell, 2010, p. 10). Gender also includes persons that cannot biologically be defined to a certain sex, but which chose to identify themselves to a certain gender: intersex persons, or those persons which do not identify their gender to their biologically sex: transgender persons (Connell, 1987, 2010).

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\(^7\) Gender identity: the gender which individuals identify themselves with.
2.2.4 GENDER AND POWER

Ultimately, gender is a question of power relations (Oakley, 2005, p. 45). Laws against homosexual intercourse, fathers and husbands deciding over the lives of their wives and daughters, and bank managers refusing giving loans to unmarried women might for some people be understood as individual cases but they are not, they are in fact part of a structure of power (Connell, 1987, p. 107, 2010, p. 76). This power structure is social relations designed with a certain scope and with the intention of permanence (Connell, 1987, p. 107). This social relation, or power structure is what feminists refer to as the patriarchy: “the idea of men as a dominant ‘sex class’” (Connell, 2010, p. 76).

Connell argues that “if authority is defined as legitimate power” then the power structures of gender makes the connection between authority and masculinity (Connell, 1987, p. 109). However, even though men in general benefit from the gender inequalities, they do not do so equally (Connell, 2010, p. 7). Men and boys can pay a considerable price if they do not conform to the dominant definition of masculinity often through verbal and physical abuse (Connell, 2010, p. 7). Also, men and boys who conform to the dominant definition pay a price, as examples: men have higher rate death by violence, as well as shorter life expectancy than women (Connell, 2010, p. 7).

2.3 THE DEFINITION

Following the definitions provided by the IASC and ECHO and the academic discussion on the topic, this thesis’s definition of gender is: gender is not decided by the biological sex of a person and thus includes persons which do not identify themselves with their biological sex or assigned gender as well as those that cannot be biologically “categorised”. Furthermore, gender is a social construction created and reproduced by the society and people with the meaning to structure both of them through power relations between the different expressions of gender. Gender equality policies therefore address these power dynamics.
3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter introduces some of the key research done on gender equality in humanitarian action with a focus on gender equality policies and implementation.

3.1 GENDER EQUALITY IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

The main guideline for humanitarian actors on gender equality is the IASC’s “Gender Handbook”. The handbook provides guidance in gender mainstreaming and targeted action throughout the cluster system and explains why a gender equality programming in crisis matters.

First, women and men respond differently to an emergency “in efforts to resist violence, survive and support their dependents women and men act differently” (IASC, 2006, p. 5).

Second, gender roles change across age and time. The failure to acknowledge this and to base programs on stereotypical perceptions of women’s and men’s roles will impact the efficiency of the aid delivered (IASC, 2006, p. 5). Women are often perceived as helpless victims and men as the persecutors but in some contexts these roles can be the opposite (IASC, 2006, p. 5). Thus, it is important that humanitarian action is mainstreamed with a gender approach to be able to deliver aid on evidence rather than assumptions.

Third, as stated gender roles change and with them the power structures of communities. This is especially the case in crisis situation where the social landscape might change dramatically. Women might need to take over the duties traditionally done by men, and men might be limited in their role as sole provider due to lack of livelihoods (IASC, 2006, p. 5). These changes can create tensions between men and women as the crisis subsides or settles into camp routine. However, these changes can also serve as a window of opportunity. Even though cultural norms and religious beliefs must be treated with respect by the humanitarian actors, some of them are harmful to certain segments of the population (IASC, 2006, p. 6). The opportunity created by the changing of gender roles
and power structures should be acknowledged by humanitarian actors as a window of opportunity to promote the well-being of all members of an affected people (ECHO, 2013, p. 5; IASC, 2006, p. 6).

Fourth, women and men bring different issues to the table; women and men have different concerns, perspectives and solutions (IASC, 2006, p. 6). If not every segment of the affected people is consulted the aid provided will not address everyone’s specific need.

Last, gender equality programming is also “a critical step towards achieving sustainable development” (IASC, 2006, p. 6). A crisis as mentioned, can be used as a window of opportunity to promote the equality for everyone.

These five examples illustrated by the IASC provide a basis of the humanitarian community’s knowledge of gender equality programming in humanitarian action and its benefits. Ultimately, it is a question of avoiding doing harm:

“Without a gender-sensitive approach, humanitarian projects risk being off-target, failing to meet their objectives, inadvertently doing harm and being in breach of the humanitarian mandate and principles.” (ECHO, 2013, p. 6)

3.2 STRATEGIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The knowledge of the benefits to gender equality programming in humanitarian action are today being incorporated in the humanitarian programme cycle through two strategies: gender mainstreaming and targeted actions (Mazurana et al., 2011, p. 9).

3.2.1 TARGETED ACTIONS

Gender roles are not the same in every community; therefore, a gender analysis is conducted for each context. The gender analysis is a part of all humanitarian needs assessments (IASC, 2006, p. 6) and it “examines the relationship among males and females, as well as between females or males of different age sets” (Mazurana et al., 2011, p. 8). The idea is to reveal who is affected, why and how much; this information help the humanitarian organisations to design a program with targeted actions which correspond to the affected people (IASC, 2006, p. 7).
A gender analysis is to be accompanied with Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD). SADD provides humanitarian actors with the information of who have been affected, as well as information on who is still to be addressed (Dakkak et al., 2007; Eklund & Tellier, 2012; Mazurana et al., 2011).

To follow up on the program designed in accordance with the gender analysis and the SADD humanitarian actors have introduced tools to assess how much a humanitarian project is designed in accordance to gender equality, such as the IASC Gender Marker\(^8\) (IASC, 2011, p. 1; Streets, Binder, & Foran, 2013).

**3.2.2 GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

The difference between targeted actions and gender mainstreaming\(^9\) is that targeted actions are directed at a specific segment of the population and their objectives are to meet a practical or strategically gender need (C. O. N. Moser, 1993, p. 150). Gender mainstreaming however takes everyone into account and it “involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.”

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\(^8\) “The IASC Gender Marker is a tool that codes, on a 0-2 scale, whether or not a humanitarian project is designed well enough to ensure that women/girls and men/boys will benefit equally from it or that it will advance gender equality in another way. If the project has the potential to contribute to gender equality, the marker predicts whether the results are likely to be limited or significant.” Humanitarian Response website “The IASC Gender Marker” [accessed May 7 2015].

When the IASC Gender Marker code 0 the projects are considered “gender blind” which means that “gender is not reflected anywhere in the project sheet or only appears in the outcomes. There is risk that the project will unintentionally fail to meet the needs of some population groups and possibly even do some harm. These projects are considered gender-blind.” IASC (2011) “IASC Gender Marker – FAC” p. 1

\(^9\) This thesis uses the globally recognised definition on gender mainstreaming by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations’ definition. “Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.” (ECOSOC, 1999, p. 23)
The idea is that every project activity affects all segments of the society (C. O. N. Moser, 1993, p. 150).

Gender mainstreaming has also been target for criticism. One argument highlights its weakness since gender mainstreaming does not have its proper institution but is rather “everyone’s responsibility”. The problem, as Caroline Moser and Annalise Moser state is that “when gender mainstreaming is the responsibility of all staff, gender issues can be diluted or disappear altogether, through non-committed decision makers and male resistance” (C. Moser & Moser, 2005, p. 16). Secondly, gender mainstreaming has a tendency to be treated as a goal in itself rather as a strategy (Hannan, 2001, p. 1).

3.3 GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES
The majority of humanitarian organisations today have some kind of gender equality policy or guidelines. A typical policy briefly introduces the organisation’s approach towards gender equality and serves as the fundamental mechanism to encourage the implementation of gender equality programming in their operational work.

There are not only policies or guidelines which have been created to institutionalise the delivering of gender equality programming but also various frameworks; inter alia the IASC Policy Statement Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action from 2008, the Sphere Project from 2011, and the IASC Gender Reference Group established 2006 and the IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap) from 2007.

10 Inter alia Care, CARITAS, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Islamic Relief, Oxfam, UNHCR, UN OCHA, WFP, etc.

11 “The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance. It is a unique forum involving the key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners. Since December 2006, the IASC Sub-Working Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action (Gender SWG) has supported the integration of gender as a crosscutting issue into the clusters and other elements of the humanitarian system”. WHO website “The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) – Gender Reference Group” [http://www.who.int/life-course/partners/iasc/en/ [accessed May 7 2015].

12 “The Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap) - an IASC initiative created in 2007 in collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) - seeks to facilitate and strengthen capacity and leadership of humanitarians to undertake and promote gender equality programming to ensure the distinct needs of women, girls, boys and men of all ages, are taken into account in humanitarian action at global, regional,
Gender equality policies are evidence-based programming mechanisms that provide the organisations with a normative and a conceptual framework (Binder, 2009, p. 45). They play the important role to promote and guide organisations to achieve gender equality in their operational work. The gender equality policies have been developed through the existing knowledge of benefits that incorporating gender equality into the humanitarian response gives. However, as Dyan Mazurana et al. argue the humanitarian community “is much less evidence driven than it should be and than it would like to be” (Mazurana et al., 2011, p. 1).

### 3.3.1 IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES
Several humanitarian organisations admit that their gender equality policies have been poorly implemented which illustrates the gap between the policy and the practice. Some of these organisations are United Nations for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), World Food Programme (WFP) and the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). UN OCHA admits that there is little knowledge of their Gender Equality Policy, and that knowledge which do exists is poorly implemented (UN OCHA, 2010, pp. 9–10). WFP’s evaluation of their gender equality policy is similar to OCHA’s, as it highlights that the policy was poorly understood by staff, and that there was no clear guidance on interpreting the policy to implementation on programming level (Betts, Gaynor, Kabuchu, & Watkins, 2014, pp. v–vii). UNHCR’s review emphasises on the need for accountability, leadership and organisational structures to successfully implement their gender equality policy (Thomas & Beck, 2010).

These are a few examples from humanitarian organisations which illustrates the difficulties to implement gender equality policies. The issue of implementation has not only been highlighted by operating organisations but also by researchers. Oxfam and country levels.” Humanitarian Response website “GenCap” https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/gencap [accessed May 7 2015].

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13 There should be no reason to believe that implementing gender equality policies are unique for the UN agencies. The reason why there is only UN Agencies provided here as examples is because it is difficult to find evaluations or reviews of NGOs gender equality policies. The reason for this might be that they are kept internally.
published in 2005 a book on gender mainstreaming in the development sector in which Moser and Moser argue that the challenge which remains for gender equality policies are in fact the implementation: “it is clear that most international development institutions have put in place gender mainstreaming policies. Therefore, it is at the level of implementation that significant challenges remain.” (C. Moser & Moser, 2005, p. 15) Lisa Eklund and Siri Tellier published in 2012 an article which focuses on gender policies through a SADD perspective and came to the conclusion that there is a gap between policy and practice, and that gender falls “in between the cracks” (Eklund & Tellier, 2012, p. 604). Similar results were found in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) report from 2007. The report reveals that even though the nearly 30 agencies studied had gender equality policies only a handful of them had gender equality targeted actions (Oppenheim Mason, 2007, p. 28).

3.4 REASONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES
When Caroline Moser tries to explore the reasons behind the gap between policy and practice she asks the question whether the policy is not essentially “symbolic”? (C. O. N. Moser, 1993, p. 149). Moser argues that one reason to why policies so often are not carried out is because they are not intended to do so, but rather that their meaning is to reassure that something is being done (C. O. N. Moser, 1993, p. 149).

Moser argues that another reason to why gender policies are poorly implemented is because they are ambiguous, and thus difficult to understand; and to be able to perfectly implement a policy there needs to be complete understanding of the objectives to be achieved (C. O. N. Moser, 1993, p. 149). Moser argues that for a policy which has complex, or extensive goals, its performance indicators and targets might be difficult to understand and therefore, difficult to achieve (C. O. N. Moser, 1993, p. 149). This is particularly true for gender equality policies which objectives are easily formulated, but which goal is complex: “we want a gender equal humanitarian response”.

Another issue, is that because humanitarian action take place in time-constraining environments “consideration of gender issues can seem to be irrelevant, or a luxury” (Byrne & Baden, 1995, pp. 5, 42). Thus, it is believed that gender equality should be
reserved to recovery and development (Brun, 2012, p. 7). The question of time, along with budget constraints, are the most cited reasons to why humanitarian agencies do not address the issue of gender equality in emergencies (Dijkhorst & Vonhof, 2005, p. 17). As a UNHCR staff states it, in the review of UNHCR’s gender equality policy "it is a time consuming and complicated operation to orchestrate, […]. Where I have worked so far, staffing and budgetary constraints did not allow full use of the AGDM\textsuperscript{14} strategy"(Thomas & Beck, 2010, p. 87).

However, introducing gender equality programming does not necessarily need to slow the humanitarian relief down but rather renders the assistance more effective. Byrne and Baden give the example of mistakes done early in the response, as inappropriate placing of sanitation facilities might later after applying gender equality programming prove to be damaging and also costly to change (Byrne & Baden, 1995, p. iv).

3.4.1 Gender; or did you mean women?
There are few gender equality policies that do not try to address the common misunderstanding in humanitarian action that gender is simply a woman’s issue. As Dijkhorst and Vonhof argue “gender is not just about women” but that in humanitarian action gender is often incorrectly used as a synonym to women (Dijkhorst & Vonhof, 2005, p. 5). In practice this means that if an organisation does gender equality programming, it is often understood as if that can only mean implementing a project which focuses on women. As an example is WFP gender equality policy review in which it is described how the organisation struggled with changing the focus from women to gender (Betts et al., 2014, p. 33). Or as UNHCR’s policy review admits “We have struggled for a long time to mainstream gender, with limited success, because gender is still confused with women only.” (Thomas & Beck, 2010, p. 18)

\textsuperscript{14}Age, Gender, Diversity, Mainstreaming.
3.4.2 Persons with gender as their work task

Gender equality policies face a multitude of problems from the very essence of its meaning to implementation. One of the humanitarian community’s answers to this has been to introduce persons with purveying gender-aware policies as their work task. These persons are employed at headquarter level, as well as deployed on the ground to work on gender related issues in humanitarian action.

Byrne and Baden suggested already in 1995, that the way forward is to widen the personnel resources: to involve “specialised staff with responsibility for integrating gender concerns” (Byrne & Baden, 1995, p. 50). As Moser and Moser point out, the NGOs which have gender specialists make the most progress on gender issues (C. Moser & Moser, 2005, p. 16). OECD’s report from 2007 emphasises on the necessity to put more senior gender specialists on the ground (Oppenheim Mason, 2007, p. 8).

The growth of gender equality in humanitarian action and along with it staff with gender as their work task has resulted in the establishment of a gender community within the humanitarian community. The gender community loosely refer to those who primarily work with gender equality in humanitarian action, as persons with gender as their work task. The gender community is dedicated to push for the agenda on gender equality in humanitarian responses. However, there is evidence that this has had its backlash as well.

There is tendency to believe that the persons with gender as their work task will “come in” and review the programs to make them gender equality sensitive and that the field staff themselves do not have to contribute to something themselves (Brun, 2012, p. 7). It is as if gender has become something that only experts can deal with (Brun, 2012, p. 7). Moser and Moser point out that the establishment of gender units at headquarter level might be regarded negatively by the staff on the ground as a top-down or culturally coercive strategies (C. Moser & Moser, 2005, p. 16).

3.5 This thesis relation to the research conducted

This literature review provides an overview of the research conducted on gender equality policies in humanitarian action as well as highlights the issue of implementation of gender
equality policies. This thesis positions itself in regards to the conducted research on two points.

First, in this thesis this question is tackled from the unique angle of persons with gender as their work task. It is unique because these persons have not figured as a study population in any of the previous research consulted for this thesis.

Second, the research reviewed shows that focus has been on the implementations issues of the two different strategies (gender mainstreaming and targeted actions). This thesis however does not solely focus on one of these strategies but focuses on why the humanitarian community with its policies, strategies, markers etc. struggles to transmit and implement the knowledge of gender equality in humanitarian action? This view requires a theory which highlights the whole as something integral. Such an approach is elementary to the holistic framework of systems theory, as next chapter shows.
4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 SYSTEMS THEORY
Systems theory is a theory which holistically aims to understand human activity by studying and organising the interaction between systems and their environment, and between the various subunits within a larger system (Covington, Jr, 1998; Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011; Skyttner, 2005). Logically, as William Covington writes “it makes sense to consider systems consisting of many parts which make up the whole” because taken separately they are not as effective as when “they are assembled into a working system” (Covington, Jr, 1998, p. 1).

Systems theory descends from the teaching of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, an Austrian biologist, who opposed himself to the idea that linear cause-and-effect theories could explain growth and change in living organisms (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 4). von Bertalanffy suggested that change might occur within an organism, or a system, because of its interaction and relationship with other systems, and its environment (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 4). Thus, the most central idea to systems theory is a system’s interaction with its environment (Covington, Jr, 1998, p. 3).

4.1.1 WHAT IS A SYSTEM?
A system is defined as “a set of interacting units or elements that form an integrated whole intended to perform some function” (Skyttner, 2005, p. 57). In everyday language one can refer to a system as something which exhibits order, pattern, purpose and stability over time (Skyttner, 2005, p. 57). The purpose of a system is its existence which it strives to maintain, thus “the purpose of a system is what it does” (Skyttner, 2005, p. 57).
A system has its distinct structural limitations that defines itself from other systems, von Bertalanffy called this the system’s boundaries (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 8). A system’s boundaries is what gives a system its uniqueness and definition (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 8). For some systems the boundaries might be clear, as for a human being for example where the physical body is the boundary (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 8). The interconnection that this system (the human being) has with other systems is of communication through five sensory modalities or through microorganisms that can enter through the boundaries, e.g. through the skin (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 8).

A system grows or changes by the exchange of energy between itself and its environment (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 8). The energy can either be tangible, or intangible: tangible is what contributes to the physical maintenance as food and water, whereas intangible energy could be information that a member of the system has which will educate the whole system (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 8). As an example: a professor’s knowledge which could bring knowledge to the whole classroom. How much knowledge which can enter through a system, depends on the level of permissibility of the system’s boundaries (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 8). The higher level of permissibility, the greater extent of interaction the system will have with its environment, thus leading to a greater openness (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 8). Therefore, a system’s ability to grow and change is directly linked to its openness. It is vital for a system to be open because otherwise it cannot change and adapt to new realities and if it cannot change it will lose its activity and relevance (Covington, Jr, 1998, p. 3).

4.1.2 How Does a System Function?
According to von Bertalanffy, a system can regulate the exchange of information, also called feedback, that it has with its environment as it comes to the system (Covington, Jr, 1998, p. 4; Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 8). This is a mechanism which makes it able for the system to evaluate whether the system’s outputs “are consonant with the perceived outcomes (goals)” of the system (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 8). Every functioning system has this control over the inputs and the outputs in its interaction with its environment (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 9). It is important to realise that a
system does not randomly interact with its environment, it does so for a purpose: to achieve its goal (Covington, Jr, 1998, p. 3). Thus, one can argue that the system exercises power over its units in its pursuit to achieve its goal.

As the figure 1 shows, there are factors in the social environment which affect a system’s inputs and outcomes, in this model it is the “worker”. The system also interacts with other systems, in this model called “collateral system”. The model also reveals how the system regulates the feedback entering the system through the inputs and how it evaluates it through the output to see whether it is working towards its outcome.

The systems relationship with its environment is characterised by the fact that the system must conform to standards within the larger environment or the system will become dysfunctional (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 6). In a system which has high level of openness there will be a flow of inputs from its environment, and vice versa in a closed system the inputs are once and for all (Skyttner, 2005, p. 53). Even though systems are capable of regulate themselves in their pursuit to realise their goals, every system also experience a certain amount of disorder and randomness (Skyttner, 2005, p. 53).

Additionally, complex systems often have specialised units performing specialised functions “to keep the system operating as it should to survive and/or grow” (Covington, Jr, 1998, p. 4). In system theory these specialised units are referred to as differentiation, an example would be a specialised division of labour, as people with gender as their work task (Skyttner, 2005, p. 53). However as Guy Rocher points out, differentiation isn’t per see an index of advancement, differentiation becomes such an index when the function produced by the original sub-unit has become “more adapted” to the new realities by the new sub-unit (Rocher, 1972, p. 199). Differentiation also requires a rearrangement and/or reintegration of the parts, and thus special care needs to be undertaken to make
sure that the subunits do not lead to disorganisation or anarchy but to “a new order between the units and sub-units” (Rocher, 1972, p. 199). The process of rearrangement and reintegration of differentiation, or new specialised sub-units, requires modifications “in the realm of values” (Rocher, 1972, p. 199). Thus, within social organisations this process can be difficult, therefore; the more general the values are, for example universal values, the smoother rearrangement and reintegration will be (Rocher, 1972, p. 199).

4.1.3 SYSTEMS THEORY IN SOCIOLOGY
Systems theory recognises numerous types of interactions between different types of systems which has made systems theory widely applicable among different research fields, among many, sociology (Covington, Jr, 1998; Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011; Skyttner, 2005).

4.1.3.1 SOCIAL SYSTEMS THEORY
Talcott Parsons is one of the earliest scholars within sociology of systems theory (Covington, Jr, 1998, p. 2). Mostly famous for his theoretical framework “structural functionalism” in which he argues that there are four functional imperatives necessary for the survival and maintenance of all social systems in relation to its external environment and internal organisation (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 6; Murphy, 2004, p. 6; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 439). According to Parsons, for the survival of a system it has to perform these four functions (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 439). Parsons’s definition of function is “a complex of activities directed towards meeting a need or needs of the system” (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 439). Furthermore, he argued that these four functions “are not mutually exclusive but are integrated” into each other and that one would have to include and consider them all when studying social systems (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 6).

First is the adaption which refers to the ability of a social system to adapt to the external environment’s or internal forces and conditions, as well as its ability to transform its environment to meet its needs, (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 6; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 439; Rocher, 1972, p. 198). Adaption is an instrumental function and
A process “to external and internal realities, to stable situation, or to slow or rapid change” (Rocher, 1972, p. 198). It is a dynamic process which involves reciprocal interaction between the system and its environment, as well as a change for the system to bring in new resources from its environment “to achieve a more satisfactory state, a more productive one [...]” (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 6; Rocher, 1972, p. 198). Ultimately, adoption is the process which brings changes to both the system and its environment (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 6). Thus, it is a creative and innovative process far from being passive (Rocher, 1972, p. 198). Parsons linked the four functional imperatives to units within societies which can be used as an example to understand them better. Adaptation for example, according to Parsons is linked to economy through labour, production, and allocation by assisting a society to adopt to, and transform its environment (Murphy, 2004, p. 7; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 445).

The second imperative function is the goal attainment, which refers to a social system’s need to create, reach and achieve goals (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 6; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 439). It is this formulation of goals, the determination to obtain them and the mobilisation of resources to do so which is the function of goal attainment which is generally oriented externally (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 6; Murphy, 2004, p. 7). Goal attainment, is in a society linked to politics, social movements and firms, as they determine the goals and allocate resources for the achievement of them (Murphy, 2004, p. 7; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 445). Following goal attainment, is integration which refers to the social system’s need to integrate and coordinate its internal components (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 6; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 439). The integration is a function which “maintain internal coherence and solidarity within the system” (Murphy, 2004, p. 7). Integration is linked to the institutions in a society which regulates the law, since they regulate the relationship between other parts of the society (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 446).

The fourth functional imperative is latency. Latency is the function that social system uses to try to maintain and transmit its norms and values to its internal components (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 6). Latency is a function which provides motivation to the actors within a system, “it provides normative patterns and manages the tensions of actors internal to the system” (Murphy, 2004, p. 7). Latency is linked to what Parsons referred
to as the fiduciary system, i.e. families and education which aims at conveying norms and values to socialise people (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 445).

4.1.4 SYSTEM THEORY IN THIS THESIS
There are several reasons to use systems theory, for example when one wants to study complex settings and where there can be many unpredictable variables (Covington, Jr, 1998, p. 4). This is much relevant for this thesis since the humanitarian community is a much complex setting and when it comes to study it and gender relations there might be many unpredictable variables to consider. Secondly, systems theory is useful since it provides the researcher with a framework which explains how different variables influence one another (Covington, Jr, 1998, p. 4). Systems theory will therefore in this thesis be able to provide a framework of how humanitarian actors influence one another when it comes to gender equality related issues. Furthermore, systems theory provides a framework of how systems move towards their goal or goals (Covington, Jr, 1998, p. 4). Since, the thesis aims to understand how the knowledge and the goals of gender equality expressed in organizations’ policies are being implemented, systems theory provide a suitable framework. Ultimately applying systems theory, the analysis and the discussion explore the possibility whether the humanitarian community can be understood as a system.

4.2 KNOWLEDGE INTO PRACTICE
The concept of Knowledge into Practice (KIP) is known by a host of names, as evidence-based practice and knowledge translation. In its essence, KIP focuses on the gap between knowledge and practice, and how we translate evidence derived from knowledge into everyday practice (Kent, Hutchinson, Fineout-Overholt, & Williamson, 2009, p. 246). Researchers of KIP thus ask the question: why in an age of so much knowledge is so little applied?

One answer to this question is found in the traditional linear approach of transferring knowledge into practice which tends to be one-dimensional and passive in its nature (Kent, Hutchinson, Fineout-Overholt, et al., 2009, p. 246). The problem with this transmission is that knowledge is not transmitted in a way in which the receiver can acquire it. An example is how new or updated policies tend to be emailed out as a bulk
mail or uploaded on the organisation’s intranet where the receiver passively receives the policy without being part of the knowledge transmitting (Kent, Hutchinson, Fineout-Overholt, et al., 2009, p. 246).

Therefore, KIP stresses the importance of the process which transmits the knowledge from researchers to practitioners. This process is carried out by “knowledge brokers”. The knowledge brokers are educators which aim is to link knowledge and practice together, as well as to challenge existing practice (Campbell, Schryer-Roy, Jessani, & Bennett, 2008; Kent, Hutchinson, & Fineout-Overholt, 2009; Wallin et al., 2011). Simply, knowledge brokers “often uncover unacceptable or poor practice not recognised by local staff and require tact, sensitivity, and also the authority to be able to tackle such situations” (Kitson, Harvey, & McCormack, 1998, p. 156). Their role is to be “active and dynamic, concerned with helping, enabling and developing a learning process rather than telling or persuading others about what they should do” (Wallin et al., 2011, p. 3). Knowledge broker uses the bottom-up approach since they interact directly with practitioners and try to support them in changing the practice (Sackett, 1997; Wallin et al., 2011).

4.2.1 Knowledge into Practice in this Thesis

KIIP is commonly used in health science and one of the models used is the Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Services which highlights three core elements for successful implementing research into practice: i) the level and nature of the evidence,\(^{15}\) ii) the context or environment into which the research is to be placed, and iii) the method or way in which the process is facilitated (Kitson et al., 1998, p. 149).

For gender equality in humanitarian action all three of these elements have an important role. However, for this research question third element is the most relevant: the way in which policies are being transferred (knowledge transmission) and implemented on the ground (knowledge implementation). Thus, this thesis primarily takes the third element, the facilitation, into account.

\(^{15}\) “there needs to be a clear understanding of the nature of evidence being used” (Kitson, Harvey, & McCormack, 1998, p. 152).
Facilitation carried out by knowledge brokers supports practitioners to change their attitudes, habits, skills and ways of working with the goal to achieve the desired outcome (Kitson et al., 1998, p. 152). This role of knowledge brokers is the same role that persons with gender as their work task in the humanitarian community have. These experts on gender related issues in humanitarian action support other practitioners in their work to integrate gender in all their activities which include to change their attitudes, habits, skills and ways of working.

The contribution to KIP in this thesis is two folded: i) it contributes to the discussion on why so much knowledge of gender equality is not being implemented, and ii) by defining knowledge brokers as a core element to transfer knowledge into practice.

Additionally, the use of KIP in this thesis is due to the fact that persons with gender as their work task are the participants interviewed for this thesis. There is therefore a direct link to the data and the concept of KIP.

4.3 SYSTEMS THEORY AND KNOWLEDGE INTO PRACTICE
In the analysis and discussion systems theory is used to identify the systems which have an impact and influence on the implementation of gender equality policies on the ground. KIP is used as a complimentary dimension to systems theory, to be able to narrow it down and to specify the theoretical framework to the research question. Together, systems theory and KIP make up the theoretical framework in this thesis. For example, one analytical function of systems theory is that it provides a framework to analyse how knowledge enter a system and KIP is a concept which gives suggestions on how to implement knowledge. Therefore, systems theory and KIP will provide a useful and relevant theoretical framework for the analysis.
Figure 2 pictures how two systems interact with each other and their external environment. As well as how they receive knowledge from the external environment which they implement into practice.
5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES
The methodology to collect data for this thesis is in-depth expert interviews of a semi-structured approach.

5.1.1 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS
In-depth interviews is a research technique that involves conducting individual interviews where the researcher is “interested in collecting ‘facts’, or gaining insights into or understanding of opinions, attitudes, experiences, processes, behaviours, or predictions.” (Rowley, 2012, p. 261). Since the research question enquires on the opinion of persons with gender as their work task on the implementation of gender equality policies, in-depth interviews suits well as methodology as it allows the gathering of data on their experiences on the topic.

In-depth interviews provide detailed information on an individual level. Therefore, it is not often sufficient data collected to be able to generalise the findings of the research (Rowley, 2012, pp. 261–262). However, as a research technique it is concerned with producing an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and thus the intent is not to make a generalisation (Dworkin, 2012, p. 1319).

5.1.2 EXPERT INTERVIEWS
The in-depth interviews conducted for this thesis are of an expert interview character. In expert interviews the participants themselves as individuals are less of interest, it is their “capacities of being an expert for a certain field” (Flick, 2006, p. 165) which makes them interesting. Thus, an expert is integrated in the research not as a single case but as someone who is representing a specific group (Flick, 2009, p. 1657).
Since the interviewer uses an expert interview to get specific knowledge from an expert, the information that is collected from an expert is more restricted compared to other interviews (Flick, 2006, p. 165). An expert interview therefore has a stronger directive function to try to exclude unproductive topics (Flick, 2006, p. 165). This allows the interviewer to be clear with what direction the interview should take and thus, access that knowledge that experts have on a chosen topic (Flick, 2006, p. 165).

In this thesis experts interviews were made since the persons interviewed are considered by their employees as experts on gender equality in humanitarian action and work explicitly with gender related issues in humanitarian settings. As Uwe Flick argues, experts are most likely a “member of an organisation with a specific function and a specific (professional) experience and knowledge […]” (Flick, 2009, p. 166).

5.1.3 SEMI-STRUCTURED Interviews
There are said to be three general formats in which to conduct interviews i) structured, ii) unstructured and iii) semi-structured. For this thesis, the in-depth expert interviews conducted were of a semi-structured approach. There is no decided templet on how to use semi-structured interviews: they can vary in number of questions and on the degree on how much the interviewer adapt to accommodate the participant (Rowley, 2012, p. 262). Semi-structured interviews differ from unstructured approaches since the interviewer has prepared questions, but it is less structured than the structured approach since the interviewer wants the participant to talk freely around a theme (Rowley, 2012, p. 262).

There are two reasons for the decision to use semi-structured interviews for this. First, it gives the researcher some flexibility but also some structure. For example, if the participant is talkative there is room for flexibility, but if the participant talk less than the researcher could rely on the prepared questions in line with the research question. Second, to be able to compare the different transcriptions to each other there needs to be some structure to the interviews (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2012, p. 31), e.g. to ask same questions to several different participants. Since this was desired for the analysis of this thesis, semi-structured interviews was chosen as a suitable interview structure.
5.2 METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS
Subjectivity is often mentioned as a limitations when conducting interviews. The criticism however, seems less relevant when the fact that the subjectivity of conducting interviews is part of the research. The researcher’s interaction and link to the field of study and its member is not perceived as an intervening variable but part of the research process (Flick, 2009, p. 16). As Steiner Kvale argues, the interest in conducting interview lies in understanding the world from a the participant’s point of view (Kvale, 2006, p. 481). Thus, there is no attempt to hide the subjectivity in conducting interviews since the interest in it relies in the subjectivity itself.

Besides, the limitations to interview techniques, I as a researcher have contributed to methodological limitations. Retrospectively, I would have needed more training in interviewing techniques or more in-depth studying of interviewing techniques before conducting the interviews. I did not know it then but my questions were too often leading and sometimes containing implicit assumptions. As a novice researcher, my own naivety and my lack of experience as an interviewer played its part; but there can also be value to naivety as one remains open to a variety of responses.

One factor promoted credibility in my interviews is that all the participants were considerably older and more experienced then I was. Thus, the probability that they would have been influenced by me might be less. Participants appeared to speak freely and several felt comfortable enough to contradict some of my questions. They also spoke about barriers that I had not myself predicted. One can never predict precisely what effect the researcher has on the participants; however, the resultant data does provide rich insight into my research question.

5.3 PARTICIPANTS, INTERVIEWS AND PARTICIPATORY OBSERVATIONS

5.3.1 THE PARTICIPANTS
I came in contact with the participants in different manners; some of them through contacts that I have made with humanitarian practitioners, and some because I had read their research. I was in contact with around 15 people for the in-depth interviews and out of this 15 people I interviewed seven. They were all humanitarian aid workers whose
working tasks explicitly are on gender equality. Four of them were women and three were men.

The interviews were well balanced in regards to gender. However, it was a quite homogenous group: the majority of participants were Caucasian and all were in the age range 40-55 years old.

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| TABLE 1: THE PARTICIPANTS. TABLE CREATED BY AUTHOR. |

These seven participants were chosen because their work task in the humanitarian sector is explicitly on gender equality. I chose to interview these people because the research question is on the transmission and implementation of knowledge on gender equality policies on the ground from the perspective of persons with gender as their work task.

I also took into account the wide range of different humanitarian actors. I therefore tried to have as diverse views as possible and thus interviewed persons from; UN agencies, the RCRCM, and NGOs. Unfortunately, I did not interview a donor agency nor a Faith Based Organisation and four of my interviews are with staff from diverse UN agencies which could be seen as a less diverse. On the other hand, I did get interviews with persons who have worked with agencies on the topic of gender equality on the global lead of the Cluster System Level. This has enabled me to get primary data from people who have worked with multitude of actors and who have a global knowledge on the issues of gender equality in humanitarian action.

In qualitative research the discussion on how many interviews are enough is quite controversial (Dworkin, 2012, p. 1319). This thesis follows the school of thought which focuses on the quality of the in-depth interviews, i.e. the amount of information each interview gives, rather than the quantity of the data (Dworkin, 2012, pp. 1319–1320). Additionally, the general rule has been applied which states that when the same stories, themes, issues, and topics are emerging from the interviews, then the researcher

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has a sufficient sample size (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p. 4). During the data gathering for this thesis, this happened around the sixth interview but I decided to conduct one more before I stopped to be sure that this was the case.

5.3.2 THE INTERVIEWS
A majority of my interviews were conducted in New York during the summer of 2014 and the remaining interviews were conducted in Geneva during the winter of 2014-2015. The interviews lasted in general around 40 minutes but some were shorter, some were longer. I often met the participants during their working time and thus, there was often not more time than that. I had an interview guide 17 prepared for myself and my participant with a couple of questions that I had emailed them prior to the interview. In semi-structured interviews it is a good practice to prepare and share some questions prior to the interview so that the participant gets an understanding of what the interviewer would be interested in discussing with them. On average I asked around eight-nine questions during the interviews, some of these questions were prepared ones that I had emailed them, and some of the questions came up during the interviews.

To make it comfortable for the interviewer I would let them chose the location and time for the interview. All but two interviews were conducted in their offices during working hours and the remaining two were conducted in cafés.

A majority of the participants were interested in me as well, and my research which contributed to a better relationship between me as an interviewer and the person that I interviewed. It made the meeting between us more comfortable and less rigid.

In accordance with the ethics of interviewing, prior to the interview I asked whether I could record the interview, and made sure that they were comfortable with that. I also made sure that they were aware that I would use the material for my master thesis but that it would be used anonymously. Retrospectively, it would have been good to also use a consent form which the participants could sign to approve of the use of the data. However, at the time I was not aware of this practice.

17 See appendix for the interview guide.
5.3.3 Participatory Observations and Informal Meetings

In addition to the interviews that I did, I met with another person who works explicitly on gender related issues in humanitarian action. I did not record this interview since it was more of an informal meeting. However, the person was aware of that it was for my master thesis and that I wanted to use the material.

I have also done participatory observations, e.g. I attended a conference\textsuperscript{18} and a webinar\textsuperscript{19} on my topic which I have field notes from and through informal meetings during my internship at a gender equality unit in a humanitarian organisation. In the analysis I inform when I refer to the transcribed verbatim interviews and my field notes.

5.4 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research tool used to analyse data which identifies, analyse and reports themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Even though many of the qualitative research techniques involve some sort of thematic element in their analysis, thematic analysis emphasises on the researcher’s active role in identifying themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80). This is in contrast to many other qualitative analysis which explain the themes to “emerge from the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80). Researcher using thematic analysis argue that if themes are residing somewhere, it is in their heads and that they emerge from their thinking of the data and how they try to understand it (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80).

One of thematic analysis main characteristic is that it is flexible, and thus allows the researcher to be flexible while analysing the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 5). However, this flexibility is not limited and thus thematic analysis is criticised for a having a “anything goes” character (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). For my thesis this is not the case because

\textsuperscript{18} “ProCap and GenCap Donor Consultation” hosted by UN OCHA at Palais des Nations January 21 2015.

\textsuperscript{19} The webinar “The Role of Gender in Humanitarian Protection and Response” held by Advanced Training Program on Humanitarian Action on December 18 2014.
I am driven by my aim and my theoretical framework, thus this thesis does not “allow” everything.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for researcher using thematic analysis is to know what counts as a theme. There are no easy answer to this question, ideally Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke write is when “there will be a number of instances of the theme across the data set, but more instances do not necessarily mean the theme itself is more crucial.” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82) They argue that the question of prevalence cannot be answered by a simple percentage or a number because that is not how qualitative research is being conducted. They argue that the researcher has to be flexible about this issue and that rigid rules do not work (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82).

5.4.1 Why thematic analysis in this thesis?
I decided to use thematic analysis because already during the transcription of the data themes reoccurred as I transcribed the interviews. Thus, thematic analysis came naturally as an analysis method. Second, my intention is to explore the underlying ideas and assumptions in the data and thematic analysis provides the researcher with a flexibility for the analysis method with the characteristics of constructionism and interpretivism. Third, thematic analysis is relatively easy method to learn and since I myself have limited knowledge of analytical methods, thematic analysis is a suitable alternative.

5.5 Analytical framework and operationalization

5.5.1 Analytical framework
During the analysis I followed the thematic analysis steps provided by Braun and Clarke, see table 2.

According to this approach the transcription process is part of the analysis since it allows the researcher to get a deeper knowledge and understanding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). The first phase also include reading and re-reading the data to familiarise yourself with it (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 87–88). Thus, my analysis started while transcribing and reading the data and already in the first phase ideas and themes started
to reoccur. In the second phase, I systematically read through the whole data set and
gave it equal attention while coding it. I did so by creating headings for reoccurring
themes in the data set. In the third phase the search for themes starts, which are broader
than the codes and they function as a way to categorise the codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006,
pp. 90–91). In the beginning of the third phase I had a long list of coded data from the
second phase that I structured and redefined until I finally had three overarching themes
left with their belonging codes. In the fourth phase, I reviewed the themes on two levels:
i) by reading the coded data extracts for each theme to make sure that they appear in a
coherent pattern, and ii) is a similar process but with the whole data set which means
that I read through the whole data set to see whether my themes “accurately” reflect the
meaning of the data set as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 91–92). When the fourth
phase is finished I was able to produce the final thematic map (see figure 3 below). In the
fifth phase I named and structured the themes as well as wrote an analysis for each and
every theme and sub-theme (see chapter 6 “Findings”). The sixth face was writing the
discussion where I applied my theoretical framework on my findings to analyse them
through a theoretical perspective (see chapter 7 “Discussion”).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description of the process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiarizing yourself with your data</td>
<td>Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating initial codes</td>
<td>Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching for themes</td>
<td>Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing themes</td>
<td>Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining and naming themes</td>
<td>Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Producing the report

The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

FIGURE 3: THEMATIC MAPS

Theme 1:

Without pressure: no progress

♦ The missing element: accountability
♦ “Money talks”
♦ Lack of gender champions: imagine Ban Ki-Moon saying: “I’m a feminist!”

First theme: “Without pressure: no progress”. Figure created by author.

Theme 2:

Gender warriors

♦ “You guys are fragmented!”
♦ “Once you go gender, you never go back”
Theme 3:

‘Doing gender’: the what, how and when?

- Expanding the definition: “it takes gender one step forward”
- No time for gender: “we have to save lives here!”

5.5.2 Operationalization

For this thesis gender and gender equality need to be operationalised. The operationalization of these three concepts is based on the theoretical understanding of the three of them found in this thesis.
The operationalization of gender is: gender is socially constructed ideas linked to the biological sex and serves as a power relation to structure the society. This operationalization influences the analysis in that sense that when the word gender is used it refers to different expressions of it and it is not limited to women and men as well as the power dynamic within the term.

The operationalization of gender equality is: the access and enjoyment to equal rights, opportunities and resources among every expression of gender. In similarity to the operationalization of gender, the operationalization of gender equality influences the analysis in that sense that it is not limited to women and men.

5.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND REFLEXIVITY OF THE ANALYSIS

5.6.1 TRUSTWORTHINESS
Trustworthiness in qualitative research aims at supporting why the research findings are worth paying attention to (Elo et al., 2014, p. 2). To evaluate trustworthiness four criteria are used: credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability (Elo et al., 2014, p. 2).

Credibility refers to that those who are identified are described accurately (Elo et al., 2014, p. 2). In this chapter I have described those persons that I have interviewed, as well as the participatory observations that I have done. Additionally, self-awareness of the researcher is essential for credibility and I as the researcher have honestly reflected on my biases and what I felt to be methodological shortcomings.

Dependability refers to “the stability of data over time and under different conditions” and aims at answer the question if someone else did the same inquiry with the same participations in the same context, would they reach the same findings? (Elo et al., 2014, p. 4) I have stated the criteria used to select the participants as well as described their main characteristics, therefore it would be possible to assess the dependability of my findings.

Conformability, refers to that the data is accurately representing the information that the participants and that the researcher is not inventing interpretations of the data (Elo et al., 2014, p. 5). I have stayed accurate throughout the analysis of the data, from the
transcription to writing the discussion. I have tried to show the conformability by being as open about the analysis, e.g. by providing extracts from the data when referring to a theme.

Transferability, refers to the potential that the findings of the research can be generalised (Elo et al., 2014, p. 2). Ultimately, it is up to the reader to judge whether the findings are transferable, but since there has not been a significant amount of interviews conducted for this thesis I am careful to judge the findings as transferable. However, this does not mean that the findings are not worthy. They do have contextual value and as with qualitative research the idea is not to generalise but to get an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon.

5.6.2 Reflexivity
Reflexivity in research refers to the process of examining oneself as a researcher. I have been both an insider and an outsider throughout writing this thesis. As an insider during my internship taking part of the gender discourse in the humanitarian sector, and as an outsider writing the thesis on the topic. Since I worked on this thesis during a long period of time, I have been able to leave those naïve assumptions and preconceptions that I had in the beginning of the research process. My relationship as a researcher to this research topic has evolved through the process of interviewing, further deepening my understanding.
6 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In this chapter the findings from the analysis are presented, discussed and analysed. Following the thematic analysis three thematic maps have been produced. Each and every thematic map represents a specific theme, or a specific barrier to the implementation of gender equality policies in the daily activities on the ground. Each and every theme represents the whole data set.

6.1 THREE THEMES: THREE DIMENSIONS

The three themes each represent a different dimension of the humanitarian community.

The first theme “Without pressure: no progress” represents the external and internal pressure that pushes the humanitarian community in certain directions. It can be understood as a structural dimension that structures the way the humanitarian community operates.

The second theme “Gender warriors” refers to the gender community within the humanitarian community. This dimension is as well a structural dimension but which focuses on the structure of the humanitarian community itself: the gender community is a structural part to the humanitarian community.

The third theme “‘Doing gender’: the what, how and when?” represents the semantic and operational understanding of gender in the humanitarian community. This dimension is found on the ground: how the ground tries to operationalise gender to be able to implement the gender equality policies and is influenced both by the first and second dimension.

![Figure 4: The three dimension. Figure created by author.](image-url)
6.2 WITHOUT PRESSURE: NO PROGRESS

The first theme “Without pressure: no progress” represents the barrier to implement gender equality policies created by the lack of external pressure on the humanitarian community such as lack of accountability mechanisms, donors and leaders. This theme can therefore be understood as a lack of order or structure within and around the humanitarian community which creates a barrier to implement gender equality policies.

This theme’s sub-themes are:

- The missing element: accountability
- “Money talks”
- Lack of gender champions: imagine Ban Ki-Moon saying: “I’m a feminist!”

6.2.1 THE MISSING ELEMENT: ACCOUNTABILITY

The lack of functioning accountability frameworks was referred to by one of the participant as one of the “major challenges” (P4) for the implementation of gender equality policies. There is simply not enough external pressure which pushes for the implementation of policies and gender equality programming. Even the different tools available for gender equality programming, as the widely used IASC Gender Marker cannot actually monitor the implementation of the commitments made on gender
equality in the design phase of the program cycle. Therefore, the analysis showed that if there is no one who is being held accountable then the policies on gender equality fall in between the cracks. It is important to highlight that the barrier in this sub-theme is not that no one is held accountable, but that there is no one that can be held accountable because there are no such mechanisms to do so.

P6: “It will take more important measures for policies to be applied, it will take one big element that is missing: the accountability mechanisms”

P4: “Policies, are good, we are at one level but how do we hold people accountable to what they have identified at their policy level obligations? What is the methodology? What is the mechanism to hold, for example, XX accountable to their gender policy?”

P5: “So, people being held accountable, the system must monitor and evaluate, but then there are never any follow-up. So the accountability thing needs to be a lot harder, for the system, at a professional level but again, the donors need to hold the community accountable.”

The last example is hinting that accountability not only needs to get tougher for the humanitarian community but also for individual practitioners.

P1: “I am not asking you to interfere with local culture. What I am asking you to do is to live up to the humanitarian imperative of provide services based on need. And, anybody in need, who should have access to those services, they should have access to those services on an equal basis. That’s what we are asking you to do.”

6.2.2 “Money Talks”
Donors have an important role when it comes to implementing gender equality policies and push for gender equality programming. They have the power to demand for accountability and to hold organisations accountable to their gender equality programming. However, the reality looks quite different since the donors are not exercising this power. Thus, organisations are not encouraged in the same way to do gender equality programming. As one participant argued that agencies do gender equality “as a joke” (P7). Therefore, the barrier in this sub-theme is this lack of donor behaviour to push for accountability:

P7: “it never trickles down, because of the key reason that once the policy is made budgets are not allocated to the policy and budgets are actually what show you how committed organisations and governments are towards actually ensuring this policy takes shape and becomes real”
One participant had several ideas on how to address this issue. For example donors could make gender equality requirements mandatory and force organisations to adapt accountability mechanisms to monitor them because “money talks” (P8)\(^{20}\). The argument is simple, if the donors had the interest to enforce gender equality programming as a requirement for funding then organisations would adapt to that reality. The same participant gave the example that donors could for example decide only to fund those organisations that conduct gender training for all their staff (P8). Other participants expressed similar ideas:

P3: “and if you say you are going to do something, and you don’t do it, and then the money is withheld in the end, because you didn’t do it, and that’s going make people sit up and pay attention”

P5: “It also means allocation of resources, that say we are going to do consistency then we need to do training, and up-skilling, support to the planers and the programmers, and that’s resources, that’s time and money”

P8: “The donors should ask ‘Are you a feminist organisation?’”

Donors, as the participants said, are the actors with “power” (P8) but as always: with power comes responsibility. If donors are requesting gender equality programming as a mandatory character for their funding then they must themselves follow through on those requests:

P5: “that said, the donor community itself need the to be held accountable, if we take SIDA\(^{21}\) for example, they made this very bold statement about not funding any gender blind projects and then they fund gender blind projects.\(^{22}\) So, the donors themselves need to stop lying to themselves. So, you know, the donors may give these tough statements but they must make sure they hold themselves accountable as well, and that’s not happening. So, it’s going to be difficult without the donors, yes it is, but the donors are not accountable. I see them as being part of the solution but they need to get their own house in order first as well and be true to what they say”

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\(^{20}\) P8 refers to an informal meeting with a person with gender as hers or his work task. This informal meeting was not recorded but there is field notes from it.

\(^{21}\) SIDA stands for Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. SIDA is a government agency, working on behalf of the Swedish government.

\(^{22}\) “SIDA adopted the Gender marker to inform their funding decisions for the 2012 CAP and on this basis announced that they would not fund projects coding zero on the Gender Marker.” (Foran, Swaine, & Burns, 2012, p. 242)
P6: “Donors are asking for it but are not then monitoring how it is done”

6.2.3 LACK OF GENDER CHAMPIONS: IMAGINE BAN KI-MOON SAYING "I'M A FEMINIST!"
The importance of committed leaders to gender equality was highlighted by the participants as a facilitating tool to implement gender equality policies. However, this type of leader is still rare. Thus, the barrier represented within this sub-theme is the lack of leaders who prioritise and put pressure to fulfil those commitments to gender equality programming. One participant argued that if leaders were actively working and promoting gender equality then they would inspire and put pressure on other staff to do likewise (P8). The same participant adds:

P8: “Imagine a senior leader saying ‘I’m a feminist!’”

The topic of leadership was often mentioned by the participants along with accountability. As if the two comes together:

P4: “We have weaknesses in terms of leadership and accountability, and in much as we are looking on an equality level, maybe it is important to invest in leadership and accountability issue, because those for me are the major challenges”

P7: “as long as there is then leadership commitment to push forward the inclusion of gender equality into other areas that staff looking at. If that leadership or that management accountability is not there, then there’s never going to happen because gender equality issues are not a priority, mostly, for most agencies and people are not dedicated to doing gender equality work”

This sub-theme is perhaps the most difficult to address since it cannot easily be standardised as donor behaviour and accountability mechanisms could be. It all boils down to the individual leader: are they interested in gender equality?

P7: “It is also driven by who is in the agencies? and who's got what interest?”

P7: “So, I think gender equality is a very personal commitment because you want to see, you want to see that difference playing out in the world”

A leader with this personal commitment is called a “gender champion” and they can do all the difference when it comes to gender equality:

P5: “If you ever have a situation where you have a gender champion, it’s much easier, much effective-. Vice versa, if you have people who, for whatever reason, don’t agree or don’t see gender in the same way, then it becomes lot, lot harder”
However, as this participant put it, those leaders are still a rarity because they do not yet truly exist:

P3: “Again, I think, it goes back to the fact that gender equality, women's empowerment, is still seen as a secondary important issue, it isn’t adequately integrated into the system. And you know, the generation of humanitarian actors gone through-, it wasn’t something that was of primary importance, in terms of what was done in the agencies in the 80s and the 90s. So, because those people are now in senior positions, and-, I guess teaching old dogs new tricks, that must be a certain aspect of it”
6.3 GENDER WARRIORS

The second theme is the theme “Gender warriors”. This theme reflects the finding in the data which refers to the “gender community” within the humanitarian community. Loosely, the gender community refers to all of those persons who have gender as their work task. They make up an entity which pushes for the incorporation of gender equality on to the agenda of humanitarian action through collaboration, partnerships, shared initiatives, inter-agency work, advocacy and trainings.

It might seem counterintuitive to add the gender community as a barrier since they are the group of people on a global level that work, promote and push for the progress of gender equality in humanitarian action. However, even gender warriors on the frontline facing a patriarchal community have their own problems which can have negative impacts on the very goal they are fighting for. The gender community does not explicitly represent a barrier to the implementation of gender equality policies and gender equality programming. The barrier is found within the inter-agency work that the gender community does to promote gender equality in humanitarian action.
That said; the gender community is also the sole reason why the humanitarian community even talks about gender equality: they are the frontrunner for gender equality in humanitarian action.

Therefore, the two sub-themes for this theme represent the negative and positive impacts that the gender community has on the implementation of gender equality policies and gender equality programming.

This theme’s sub-themes are:

- “You guys are fragmented!”
- “Once you go gender, you never go back”

6.3.1 “YOU GUYS ARE FRAGMENTED!”

First and foremost, the gender community suffers from the reality that it is a much fragmented community. The people in the gender community come from a wide range of different organisations with different mandates pushing for gender equality in different manners. Furthermore, gender is a personal commitment (P4, P7), and as many different persons there are, there are as many different personal commitments. The issue arises when this wide range of actors is working and collaborating with each other and tries together as an entity to transmit knowledge on gender equality to the ground and to the wider humanitarian community. Thus, the issue might not be the function of the gender community but rather its structure.

P2: “Whether one of the reasons why we haven't reached it with the practitioners in the field to the point it haven't been effective, is that we have not acknowledge the very, very broad range of opinions that are amongst us.”

P7: “gender equality issues become very contentious, so often there is a lot of energy wasted between agencies in fighting, and proving-, trying to bring in their own agendas”

P6: “The divide, I would say is more in terms of approach. [...] One, looking at girls and women and their empowerment in the society, and the other one, looking more on doing targeted actions in order to advance gender equality in favour of a specific group, in order to level the playground. [...] It is a divide that very much exist in the community working on gender in emergencies.”

P7: “everyone works towards the same goals, but everyone is also divided because they are seeing it through their own eyes.”

P2: “I think we present this fragmented picture faced to the practitioners in the field.”
P5: “I think that one of the things that we are bad at as a gender community, I think is actually giving the field what it wants.”

P7: “there is a lot of personal driven politics that happens, and that really needs to take a back seat, because a lot of energy is wasted on, pushing forward agendas and things like that and not necessarily having the big picture in view.”

However, the analysis also showed that there were measures taken to unify the gender community. One participant made the comparison to women’s movement, arguing that the fractions found in the gender community is nothing specific for the work on gender equality in humanitarian action but can be found in women’s movements across the world (P7). The same participant also expressed that when the gender community is confronted with difficult times they do come together:

P7: “I mean this is true of, not just of-, international agencies but women's movement across the world”

P7: “people in organisations that are divided politically but when required they can come together, and they do come together because I think they are able to see the larger vision.”

P2: “there is an on-going discussion on how we [gender community] can present in a more unified, more holistic more effective approach to the broader humanitarian community.”

Secondly, as stated the actors within the gender community are persons with gender as their work task. One important aspect in their work is to interact with practitioners on the ground and to support and transmit knowledge on gender equality in humanitarian action to them e.g. through trainings and facilitation. Equally important is their work to support the ground in the design and implementation phases while applying gender equality programming. However, as a fragmented community, their support provided to the ground can become a barrier to their own goal; namely to implement gender equality policies. The issue is that the support provided by the gender community is not practical enough:

P5: “I think, possibly the gender community itself needs to improve its soft skills, to be able to approach people and offer help, and to be able to help on all phases of programme cycle. When I say help, it is not just-, it's providing proper help, not just going in with a clipboard.”

P2: “I think we have to take some of the responsibility, for not being able to translate that into, pragmatic steps that resonate with a very pragmatic community of people.”

P7: “So, I also think it depends on, you know, if you go in and you take the time as a gender equality expert, or to provide this technical expertise to understand the situation you are in first, and what is going around. And then look at what is the nature of support that is
required by them. And let them start articulate to you what is the level of support required and once they articulate, and they realise there is going to be a lot support coming or, planning, or just helping them for example even doing gender audits, you know?”

P2: “here is our check-list’. You know, you name it we have all gone to them with our check lists. And they have literally thrown their hands in the air with despair and said ‘we discard your orders because you guys are fragmented!’”

One participant expressed that the gender community could potentially be a barrier to the understanding of gender, arguing that it focuses too much on women and girls:

P5: “The crux side of that is that the gender community to a degree perpetuate that. In that, that the gender community quite often doesn’t come up with examples that are-, it struggles when you are trying to explain to somebody that ‘this is how men are affected by crises”

P5: “well actually I have never heard a humanitarian saying ‘gender is about woman’. I think I hear a humanitarian say ‘gender community pushes gender as being a woman’s issue’. Which I think is a different issue. And I guess that, that becomes another situation, but I never heard a humanitarian say ‘Gender is about woman’, but I have heard them say ‘Gender community only invests in woman’.”

Thirdly, the use of persons with gender as their work task has resulted in the understanding that to do gender equality related work certain technical skills are required. Thus, there is the perception that only people with an expertise on gender equality can address gender equality related issues. Thus, practitioners argue that they themselves cannot address those issues because they do not have that expertise. This phenomena was menti oned in a previous conducted research mentioned in the literature review (Brun, 2012). This perception creates a barrier for the implementation of gender equality policies and gender equality programming:

P1: “they become a cop out for everybody else. It's like, ‘Oh, that’s a gender issue, they will handle it. We don't need to do that, we have an expert here’ or ‘that expert will tell us what we should do, we don't have to be able to know that for ourselves.’”

P5: “and their projects are written and then they give them to some gender expert and say ‘Put some gender in this’. So, unfortunately this is the module tend to be used.”

P6: “There at this stage, a lot of excuses, ‘No time’, ‘I’m not an expert’, ‘I don’t know how do to this’”

The fact that gender has for a long time been considered a woman’s issue, the positions in the humanitarian community to work on gender equality related issues are therefore often held by women. In the gender community a great majority is women which sadly, does not contribute to a more nuanced understanding of gender. As a staffing issue it causes barriers in the implementation since the programming heavily focuses on women:
P1: “you have programs like gender-based violence programs, around the world. Almost 100% women. Which I think is equally problematic. Because, you have women who are working who are survivors of gender-based violence, they don't know how to work with the men, they don't know how to engage the men, they don't know how to work with male survivors of gender-based violence.”

P4: “and it doesn't also help that a lot that a lot of, gender actors or specialists are women. It is seen as a women's issue immediately when we talk about gender, more half of the people will say 'what we are doing for women is...’ you know?”

P4: “I mean even women themselves that are speaking about gender, speak about women. And, I think even to have gender advisers who are men help.”

Ultimately, the use of staff with an expertise on gender for the implementation of gender equality policies highlights a larger issue. As this participant put it:

P1: “we still have gender experts around the world, and we still need them, and maybe we always will. But, to me, that's mean we haven't yet learned this.”

Last, several participants highlighted the issue that the language used by people from the gender community is not adapted to another audience. Thus, there is a language barrier between practitioners and persons with gender as their work task which has an impact both on the transmission of knowledge and the implementation of gender equality policies.

P4: “sometimes I think, as a gender person, we have-, we speak to ourselves, we have our jargon, if I speak to another gender adviser, they [practitioners] will not know what we are talking about.”

P5: “Ok, so my personal opinion is, that sometimes we don't give our power, we don't change our messages to the audience [practitioners]. So, though, we might have right-based message we are very bad at capturing that in needs-based terms. And we need to understand what our audience understand.”

P6: “Be practical, and talk in their [practitioners] language and what is important is to understand their constraints, recognise them and provide a really hands-on practical support.”

6.3.2 “Once you go gender, you never go back”
The second sub-theme for the theme “Gender warriors” is “Once you go gender, you never go back”. This sub-theme depicts the positive aspects of the gender community but it also reveals the reality for gender equality in humanitarian action. The analysis showed that the persons with gender as their work task picture themselves as warriors in a community which does not naturally incorporate their struggle in its daily activities. The reality is that the gender community becomes this group of specialised labour force
that the wider community both respect and roll their eyes at which further triggers them to “fight the fight”, or as one participant put it to “maintain the rage!” (P8)

P4: “Gender has to do with interest, you might have someone and they are not interested in gender, they are not even interested in changing roles. It's a lifestyle, ‘once you go gender you never go back’.”

P7: “you know there is an overarching patriarchal culture where when you are coming in on the gender equality principles; it is often seen as you are rocking the boat.”

P4: “Don't give up! It will be hard and it is just a lifestyle. My advice to you: small steps, small steps, small steps, consistency, consistency. Don't give up! Even when you walked five steps back, just come back, just do it, because every day it is political war you are fighting.”

There exists this sense of personal responsibility among the gender warriors to keep on fighting for gender equality:

P4: “We have to press the button! We have to keep our finger on the button. We have to fight for gender equality!”

P3: “it will be our jobs to be the police man, or police man and women, police people should we say, and to make sure that people are implementing those projects.”

P7: “I will always bring up the issue of gender equality norms. Simply because you-, it's like a duty, you have to do it. You know, to have people consider: ‘are you thinking how this impact women and girls differently, or men and boys differently?’”

P2: “This actually makes me think quiet deeply and sometimes stay awake at night, wondering what’s causing the difficulty for issues around gender equality and women’s empowerment in humanitarian action”

Finally, there is a necessity to have a gender community and persons with gender as their work task simply because they are the one which push for the agenda on gender equality in humanitarian action. As this participant expressed it:

P7: “the gender community plays a very key role, I would think because they ensure that the issues are always on the table and wherever they go they keep on bringing it up. So, you know, it never leaves the agenda”

P7: “And they exists anywhere, so no doubt on them. In every context, in every situation, they are always there in some form.”
The third theme following the analysis is the theme called “‘Doing gender’: the what, how and when?” The title of the theme explains the barrier found within it: what is gender equality? How do we “do gender” and when do we “do it”? Note how the sub-theme does not raise the question “why do we ‘do gender’?” Simply, as this thesis argues, the humanitarian community knows why it should incorporate gender equality into its work: it is already “talking the talk”. The interviews therefore did not provide any data on why we “do gender” because it is already well established. The questions which remain, as this analysis shows, are: what gender is, how do one “do gender”, and when do one “do gender”?

This theme can be understood as the semantic and operational understanding of gender in the humanitarian community. As one might have suspected it was revealed in the analysis that gender in the humanitarian community is a contested concept.

This theme’s sub-themes are:

- Expanding the definition: “it takes gender one step forward”
- No time for gender: “we have to save lives here!”

**Figure 7: Thematic Map 3 “‘Doing gender’: the what, how, and when?”
Figure created by author.**
6.4.1 EXPANDING THE DEFINITION: “IT TAKES GENDER ONE STEP FORWARD”

This sub-theme refers to the “what?” in the title for the theme “‘Doing gender’: the what, how and when?” Namely, what gender is for the humanitarian community both from a semantic understanding of the term as well as the operational understanding of it?

As it was revealed in the literature review, gender in humanitarian action has long been misunderstood as a women’s-only issue. This was confirmed by the participants:

P7: “‘ghetto-wise’ as a ‘women’s-only-problem’, or a ‘women’s-only-issue’.”

P3: “Yeah, most people in their mind, if you talk to them about gender in the humanitarian context, they think about in terms of issues tangled to women and girls”

However, this understanding of gender is slowly changing to also include “men and boys” or “half of the population” (P6) as they are referred to. One of the participants even argued that she or he never came across an aid worker who did not “get gender”:

P5: “I think my experience is that the humanitarian folks on the ground want to do the right thing. And you know when I hear gender colleagues say "no wait, they don't get gender", and it's like they do get gender. I think, I have not yet come across any humanitarian that does not understand the importance of gender in what they do.”

Slowly, the progress of understanding gender as an inclusive term is taking its root in the humanitarian community. The progress does not “only” include men and boys into the concept of gender but it also gives way for a new transformative way to understand gender. This progress is pushed by forces within as well as external to the gender community and it is said to take gender “one step forward” (P2) as it adds diversity to the understanding of gender in humanitarian action. Things like “age and disability, class, cast, creed, minors, sexuality, gender identity etc.” (P2) are now being introduced to the understanding of gender both from a semantic and operational viewpoint:

P2: “there has been, in my mind, a much broader, holistic discussion going on about how, the cross-cutting issues more broadly. So things about age, disability, other forms of diversity and gender as well as HIV, what else do we have, environment.”

P7: “so when we are doing these things we have to look at it holistically, we can’t just look at only one aspect”

P6: “Not only looking at gender but looking at other important dimensions such as interact with gender issues, obviously to make sure that adolescent girl which has the discrimination of being young, and being a woman, this needs are different from the needs of an adolescent man which is very different from a widow, or age that might also have disability, you know, so different elements that need to be taking into consideration.”
As this participant describes the necessity of diversity in the understanding of gender:

P4: They [affected people] will talk about water for cooking, talk about water washing their children; it is linked to their gender roles. All their needs are linked to the gender role. If you ask the men, they will tell you they want water too for our livestock, "I want water to, to water my camels, because they are the most important asset that I have in this setting." They are all speaking about water, but they are talking about the different uses of water.

According to the participants the barrier of misunderstanding gender as women’s ghetto is slowly being torn down. However, the addition of diversity has not yet addressed people outside the gender binary: the discourse is still focusing on men and women with the addition of age and diversity. Only one participant mentioned the inclusion of gender diversity but otherwise the focus were on women and men.

P2: “And so, diversity introduces another nuance of looking at people more holistically, from the view of things like age and disability, class, cast, creed, minors, sexuality, gender identity etc.”

6.4.2 “WE HAVE TO SAVE LIVES HERE!”
The second sub-theme refers to the “how, and when” in the title for the theme “‘Doing gender’: the what, how and when?” This sub-theme represent the operational understanding of gender, namely how to “do gender” and when to “do gender”.

First, within the humanitarian community there is the understanding that the inclusion of gender equality into the humanitarian programme cycle must mean that the work will take longer time. It is believed that time cannot be wasted on something as luxurious as gender equality. This problematic is mentioned in the literature review and even after years of rhetoric from researchers and humanitarian organisation on the question of timing it still remains an issue for the implementation. The barrier in this sub-theme is therefore the understanding of gender equality programming among practitioners as something impractical and time-consuming:

P1: “And we certainly hear, all the time, from people ‘We don’t have time to do that’”

P7: “‘We are not pushing the person to work on gender because the emergency nature of the operations’. And this is so commonly heard that it is not-, it’s-, it’s not unusual at all to hear this because there’s a feeling that the emergency nature of the work means that you don’t really need to take into account, you know significant gender issues that might pop up at that stage which leave you with a gaping whole because when you ultimately start to deal with it, you-, your life file steps behind.”
P3: “South Sudan is a good example, prior to the current situation in South Sudan there was four-five years of GenCap. And they worked with the Humanitarian Country Team, they worked with South Sudanese government, setting up these policies, and arrangements to ensure gender equality and women’s empowerment and inscribed into the humanitarian coordination. But, as soon as, excuse my French, the shit hit the fan, it blow out the window, it was back to ‘we have to…’, and it's understandable to an extent, you know it was back, of course to the, what’s the term? ‘Tyranny of the needy’, of, ‘we have to save lives here’ and all of these additionally extras, optional extras, as, gender equality and women’s empowerment, or age, or disability that was pushed, that was seen as a secondary consideration, it was ‘let’s deal with the here and now and save as many lives as you possibly can’.”

P5: “What they don’t have is time, what they don’t have is the possible technical skills and they don’t have the understanding of how to implement gender. And I think in some respect, possibly even they don’t actually, they do not, they cannot see the relevance to some of their projects at that time.”

A common argument against the idea that gender slows down the emergency response is that instead of it being more work to do, it is simply just a different way of thinking while doing the work. As this participant expressed it:

P1: “Because it isn’t more work, it is a different way of working. And, it is a different way of thinking. And if people always think it is something extra, we are never going get there.”

The debate on when to bring a gender equality programming into the work continues to divide humanitarian aid workers. However, all the participants agreed that it must be considered from the start but one:

P5: “And, to come in and you know not only gender, but age, diversity all the other cross-cutting issues, to be able to come and start demanding project to people who just hit the ground, people still dying around them is possible unfair.”

Secondly, following the idea that it is time-consuming is the perception that gender equality programming is not a practical activity but a theoretical activity, almost as a luxury for humanitarian response. Thus the participants highlighted the importance to provide support in a practical manner:

P5: “and basically the two questions I think, by looking at gender lenses: one, you don’t do any harm, and two, you don’t accidently forget people. And that’s it.”

As one participant explained it, do not just say that this refugee camp needs to be gender sensitive but provide hands-on support, e.g. take the camp manager on a walk and highlight that the lack of light could create security issues, especially for women and girls in form of Gender Based Violence (GBV).
P4: “You have to do the practical thing. We need to do it based on an analysis; in case of GBV: do we have safe places? Do we have night light for women? You know, those things we have to do at a practical level.”
7 DISCUSSION

The discussion is separated into two parts but make up one discussion. The first part analyses and discusses the humanitarian community as a system in accordance with systems theory as well as the gender community as sub-unit in the humanitarian system. This first part of the discussion provides the foundation for the second part where the idea that the humanitarian community is a system is applied while discussing the research question in relation to the findings of this thesis.

7.1 THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM AND SYSTEMS THEORY

7.1.1 HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY AS A SYSTEM

The definition of a system as “a set of interacting units or elements that form an integrated whole intended to perform some function” (Skyttner, 2005, p. 57) is applicable to the humanitarian community, or as it will be called from now on the humanitarian system. It is a whole which is made up by its subunits, such as NGOs and as a whole it performs the function of responding to humanitarian emergencies.

How much knowledge that can enter systems depends on the level of permissibility of the system’s boundaries, i.e. the amount of interaction with its environment. If a system has high level of permissibility it is an open system which enables the system to grow and adapt to its environment. Thus, the more open a system is the more knowledge can enter it. This function can be linked to Parsons’s first functional imperative “adaption”: the ability of a system to change and bring in new resources from the external environment in. In the case of the humanitarian system it is an open system and its adaption function functions well because it has a high level of interaction with its environment, especially with donors. Therefore, the issue for the humanitarian system is not the interaction with its environment and thus the ability to receive knowledge but rather what it actually does with the knowledge as soon as it has entered the system.
To better understand how systems theory has been used in this thesis figure 8 explains the structure of the humanitarian system in accordance with systems theory. In figure 8 the humanitarian system is depicted with its external environment around it. The humanitarian system itself is presented as a whole and some of its sub-units are represented in the figure: NGOs, the UN, the RCRCM, the IASC and the gender community. Around the humanitarian system is the external environment which in this figure is represented as systems themselves: donors, research, governments, affected people, etc. The boarders between the humanitarian system and the external environment are not closed since there is an active interaction between the both of them. The same idea goes for the humanitarian system and its sub-units.

The arrows between the gender community and the humanitarian system and its sub-units visualise the interaction between it and the system as well as between it and units. An example of such interaction is the knowledge transmission on gender equality by the gender community to the wider humanitarian system. The same interaction is depicted with the arrows between the external environment and the humanitarian system as whole and sub-units.
It is debatable whether the donors for example should not rather be a part of the humanitarian system than the external environment. For this discussion I have chosen to see the donors as an external actor because they exercise a certain amount of influence over the humanitarian system. For example, the humanitarian system adapts and conforms itself to the demands of the donors to be able to continue to exist in accordance to the first functional imperative “adaption”. When it comes to the gender community it is possible to argue that it should not be understood as a sub-unit since it is a community made up by people who are working within other sub-units, e.g. persons with gender as their work task both belong to the gender community as well as the sub-units they are working within e.g. within the sub-unit of the UN. However, the persons with gender as their work task differ from an average practitioner since they try to influence their sub-units with the knowledge gathered within the gender community.

7.1.2 Gender as a necessity

The humanitarian system is an open system which interacts with its environment. The interest to do so, resides in the fact that everything a system does, it does for its own survival and to be able to achieve its goal. Therefore, the humanitarian system interacts and adapts itself to the new realities of its environment so it does not lose its activity and relevance.

In accordance to this idea, the humanitarian system created the gender community as a measure to survive and to be able to achieve its goal. External pressure from donors and from a changing discourse within public opinion, civil society and politics during the last decades through women’s rights movements, as for example the Beijing Conference in 1995, has pressured the humanitarian system to conform and to adapt to these new realities and standards. As an example, donors as SIDA and ECHO 23 are asking organisations to show how they will incorporate gender equality into their operations, and SIDA even requires it, for the organisations to receive the funding. To meet this demand from its external environment the humanitarian system created the gender community as a necessity for it to achieve its goal.

23 See Streets, Binder, & Foran, 2013
According to systems theory, it is not unusual that systems create specialised units performing specific functions to be able to continue function and to grow. However, the integration of these specialised units requires modifications within the system, i.e. these units need to get their own space within the system which can mean a change of structure. Then these units need to become integrated into the wider system. This can be proved difficult, especially if a specialised unit brings values with it that can be considered controversial. This is true for the gender community since gender is a contested concept.

Thus a barrier to the implementation of gender equality policies is that the gender community has not been well integrated into the humanitarian system because its message is too controversial for some parts of the system. As Parsons argued, the third functional imperative, integration, is needed to be able to maintain coherence with the system for it to function (Friedman & Neuman Allen, 2011, p. 6). Therefore, a system which cannot properly integrate its units cannot either function, i.e. the function of the gender community to transmit knowledge and to support the implementation of gender equality policies and programming in the wider humanitarian system is not functioning simply because it is not well integrated.

In the findings it was described by some participants that they were “fighting a fight” against a patriarchal system. This illustrates the mal-integration of the gender community into the humanitarian system. This mal-integration has its consequences on the implementation of gender equality policies and gender equality programming since the wider system has not accepted the gender community, or that the gender community has not adapted itself to the wider humanitarian system. As an example, several participants expressed the need to have a common language on gender equality because as the situation is now, persons with gender as their work task are talking to each other in a language that an average practitioner cannot understand which further separates them from each other.

Why would the humanitarian system introduce a unit for its own structure and survival if some of its already existing units would oppose it? Systems theory explains this by disorder and randomness that every system experience. Even though systems can regulate its activities to be able to realise its goal it will nonetheless experience a certain
amount of disorder or randomness. This is the case for the gender community both in its interaction with other sub-units and the humanitarian system as a whole, as well internally while fighting each other on what gender equality in humanitarian action should be, how it should be done and when it should be done.

To complement the conceptualisation of the humanitarian system found in figure 8 a second conceptualisation is provided to highlight that gender as a power dynamic (see figure 9). The humanitarian system created the gender community to add the dynamic of gender into its outcomes and goals. However, this is not to say that the gender community introduced the power dynamic of gender to the humanitarian system. The dynamic of gender already permeated the humanitarian system prior to the introduction of the gender community.

**Figure 9:** Conceptualisation of Gender as a Power Dynamic within the Humanitarian System. Figure created by Author.
7.2 THE FINDINGS IN RELATION TO RESEARCH QUESTION

The first part of the discussion established the humanitarian community as a system and the gender community as a sub-unit to this system. It was revealed that the humanitarian system is an open system as well as that the gender community is poorly integrated into the system. This poor integration creates conflicts and tensions while interacting with other sub-units as well as within itself. These two conclusions will be applied in the second part of the discussion which will discuss the research question in relation to the findings of this thesis.

7.2.1 GENDER: THE SECOND PRIORITY

The finding chapter showed that there is lack of pressure on the humanitarian system to follow through on the commitments made on gender equality. Therefore, the issue of this theme in relation to the research question is the lack of external structure in which knowledge implementation takes place.

In Parsons’s theory on social systems, every functioning system formulates its own goals that it wishes to attain and mobilise resources for its attainment. The humanitarian system has goals formulated in policies, guidelines and programmes on gender equality but still struggles to attain these goals. As the research of Moser in the literature review revealed, gender equality policies’ objectives are often too ambiguous and thus difficult to understand and furthermore to implement. Additionally, there is no mobilisation of resources to truly implement the policies because there is not enough external pressure to actually do so. These two realities of gender equality policies are barriers for its implementation and thus there is reason to argue that the function “goal attainment” for gender equality policies is not functioning as well as wished.

This shows the level of actual commitment. No matter if knowledge on gender equality is accessible through policies, guidelines, and trainings there is nonetheless no resources allocated to its achievement and no proper accountability mechanism to push for it to happen. As the findings revealed: organisations do gender equality “as a joke”. As Moser argues, some policies are not intended to be carried out but are purely “symbolic”, i.e. their meaning is to erasure that something is being done. Humanitarian organisation do
gender equality because they have to: they have a symbolic meaning but are not being take seriously.

The joke to “do gender” within the humanitarian system is sadly the reality, as it continues to be viewed as a second priority: something that someone might do when the crisis have begun to move from the initial emergency phase towards a phase characterised by stabilisation.

A reason why gender is viewed as a second priority is because of the patriarchal setting of the humanitarian system. Gender equality programming is not prioritised because the system itself is not “gender neutral” (see figure 9). This attitude is possible since the external environment to some degree accepts it. As SIDA, which states it will reject funding to projects that are considered “gender blind” by the IASC Gender Marker but who will then anyway go ahead and fund “gender blind” projects.

The findings highlight that gender is often understood as personal commitment and that people incorporate gender equality into their work because they want to see a normative change in the world. This is linked to the fourth function latency which tries to transmit norms into the system. Thus, the question should perhaps rather be if the issue is not the implementation of norms than the implementation of knowledge. After all, gender equality is not so much knowledge as it is a norm: a “lifestyle” as some participants explained it. Thus, the barrier to implement gender equality policies and gender equality programming might be much more complex than the failure to transmit and implement the knowledge on it. Here the underlying deep-rooted issue hides: the agreement and implementation of norms (gender equality).

7.2.2 INTEGRATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF NORMS

The role of the gender community in regards to the research question is its role as the entity which facilitates the transmission of the knowledge into practice.

By applying KIP to the discussion, it becomes clear that the gender community is what KIP defines as the knowledge brokers. The knowledge brokers key role is to support practitioners to change their attitudes, habits, skills and ways of working with the goal to
achieve the desired outcome (Kitson et al., 1998, p. 152). Therefore, knowledge brokers do not only transmit knowledge and support practitioners with the implementation of that knowledge but they also work to challenge and change attitudes.

As discussed above, Parsons’ fourth functional imperative latency stabilises systems by common norms. Latency is a function that when functioning well can motivate actors as well as ease tension between them because it has succeeded to make the actors follow the same normative patterns. This function is similar to the role of knowledge brokers which have the task to challenge and change attitudes and norms. Persons with gender as their work task are the humanitarian system’s mechanism to transmit norms and values to its internal components. Parsons believed that latency could be taught by educational means as knowledge brokers do by trainings, audits and support. Thus, the knowledge brokers have the difficult task to unify the system behind the attitude and the normative based agreement that gender equality is important for the function of the humanitarian system and therefore should be implemented in all its activities.

To further discuss latency, the previous chapter on findings revealed that there is not one common understanding of gender in the humanitarian system but there are different characteristics and normative values attached to it depending on who you ask. This finding is relevant because it shows that the neither the gender community nor the humanitarian system have succeeded with the function of latency. Gender is still not important enough to become a part of the nature of humanitarian action (it remains a second priority). Therefore, the gender community as well as the humanitarian system are fragmented on the questions “what is gender?”, “how do we ‘do gender’?” and “when do we ‘do gender’?” As long as they remain fragmented, the humanitarian community will not be able to unify the system behind certain norms and motivate it to work in accordance with and for them. Therefore, the gender community needs to become less fragmented so that it can push as a united entity for a normative change.

Additionally, latency can explain the mal-integration of the gender community into the humanitarian system because of the fact that it is based on norms which the wider system does not accept since gender is perceived as a second priority.
7.2.3  **Fighting the Fight**

“The fight” which the gender warriors referred to in the findings is their ultimate battle against the patriarchal humanitarian system. Several of the participants highlighted this by saying that what they ultimately do is to challenge norms and change mind-sets. They did however express optimism because they know that with time norms are challenged and mind-sets are changed. It is all a matter of time.

This fight, as previous discussed is perceived as a personal commitment. Thus, the fight for gender equality, and the gender warriors’ struggle is characterised by a dimension that cannot easily be measured or calculated, namely: emotions. Norms, attitudes and values are terms highly connected with the emotions linked to them. This rage of emotions, or the rage to maintain “the fight” keeps the gender warriors fighting for gender equality and it is also what unites them when time is critical. Thus, emotions have a dynamic role in both the transmission and the implementation of gender equality policies and programming.

However, this “fight” can be an additional reason to why the gender community is mal-integrated into the wider humanitarian system. In their fight against it they also become alienated from it. It is as if their fight both can challenge norms and mind-sets but at the same time alienate them from the people they try to influence. The fight in this sense is a double-edged sword.

Even though the “fight” has its positive and negative sides there is reason to believe that without it gender equality in humanitarian action would perish. After all gender is a second priority. Thus, there has to be someone who is pushing, or fighting for it or otherwise it would disappear.

7.2.4  **The Simplification of Gender**

The research question puts knowledge implementation into practice in focus. The two first themes can be understood as structural issues within and around the humanitarian system which create barriers to the implementation of gender equality policies. The third theme however represents the operational barriers to the implementation of gender equality programming. On this “ground” level of barriers it becomes evident that the
knowledge transmission and the implementation fail to become operational and “understandable” to the practitioners. There is still this idea that gender equality is something foreign that is supposed to be done by experts and there is still confusion over what gender entails: is it women? Is it also men? Is it everyone?! Even though the humanitarian system is in need of an “understandable” and practical interpretation of gender to be able to implement the knowledge in its daily activities on the ground there is the risk that gender becomes “simplified” within humanitarian action. The classical example so often heard of good gender equality programming is to make sure that toilets have locks. Though, putting locks on toilets is a most important protection measure the example depicts gender equality programming as an easy fix. As if putting locks on toilets would miraculously prevent and stop physical and mental harassment towards those using it by their perpetrators. The picture provided is a bit too easy, almost as if it was more important to say that they put locks on the toilet doors as a gender equality programming measure to please the donors than to actually program in accordance with gender equality.

Following this discussion it becomes evident that the use and understanding of words play an important role in the transmission and the implementation of gender equality policies and programmes. Especially, for the term gender which is a contested concept and thus difficult to translate into understandable words. However, as discussed it desperately needs to be translated into something understandable. Thus the simplification of gender is not desired but for the moment the only measure.

Another argument is that “gender is a way of thinking”. This argument is used to motivate practitioners by saying that they do not have to do their work differently; they just have to think differently. However, while contemplating on this one realises quite fast that it is easier to change work styles than mind-sets. It is important that the humanitarian system is aware of the difficulty in this, and especially the people that transmit knowledge on gender equality in humanitarian action and support practitioners in implementing that knowledge are aware of it. For gender equality programming to happen people need to dramatically change the way in which they observe and understand the society. It is about

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24 This argument was for example used during the conference attended for the purpose of this thesis.
changing norms, behaviours and attitudes and that might very well be one of the more
difficult tasks to handle. As one participant put it: “teaching old dogs new tricks”.

Last, the findings also revealed that the understanding of gender in humanitarian action
does not correspond to that definition provided in this thesis. The humanitarian system
struggles with the inclusiveness of the term. The system still refers to gender within the
gender binary and thus anyone that falls outside this strict division is simply not
acknowledged.

7.2.5 THE NO-“MAN’S” LAND BETWEEN TRANSMISSION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The research question for this thesis asks why knowledge on gender equality
programming is not transmitted and/or implemented into practice. Thus, it gives the
implicit idea that it is either a problem of knowledge transmission, knowledge
implementation or both of them. This idea of a distinction between knowledge
transmission and knowledge implementation implies that the content of the thesis would
be placed within one or both of them. Instead, there seems as if there is no clear
distinction between these two camps and that this thesis finds itself in a grey land
between knowledge transmission and knowledge implementation.

The reason why the thesis departed from this idea relies in the theoretical framework,
namely the use of KIP. KIP is often used by medical science and there might be a distinct
separation of knowledge transmission and knowledge implementation in medical
science. As an example, the knowledge of the spread of bacteria (knowledge
transmission) leads to the implementation of washing and sanitising of hands (knowledge
implementation). However, does the same apply when it is attitudes and norms that are
being transmitted and implemented? Can one argue that there is a clear cut between the
act of transmitting norms and the implementation of them? Or, is it rather a no-“man’s”
land in between which has equal impact on both transmission and implementation.

This grey zone, or no-“man’s” land represents that zone where knowledge on gender
equality (policy) transmits into practice (implementation). This zone is governed by
elements that are less easy to predict and standardise such as norms, attitudes,
awareness and emotions. Thus, the simple answer with the difficult reality is that the
implementation of gender equality policies will remain an issue as long as there is no common agreement on it.
8 CONCLUSION
As the findings and the discussion revealed there is not one single answer to why knowledge on gender equality policies and programming in humanitarian action is not being transmitted or implemented into practice despite policies on it. However, three different dimensions have been identified as barriers to the knowledge transmission and knowledge implementation:

1. There is lack of accountability mechanisms, donors and leaders which pressure the humanitarian community to stick to their commitments made on gender equality.

2. There is issues of internal structure within the humanitarian community. The gender community is fragmented and it is mal-integrated into the rest of the community.

3. On the operational level there is no suitable understanding of the term gender among practitioners and how to operationalise it.

These three dimensions of barriers are characterised by two additional elements: i) gender equality is a second priority in humanitarian action, and ii) gender equality is normative based. These two elements influence the transmission and implementation related to gender equality on the three dimensions.

In addition to these three levels the thesis has also highlighted the issue of the grey land between knowledge transmission and knowledge implementation governed by norms and attitudes. This thesis started out with the idea that there is a separation between knowledge transmission and knowledge implementation and perhaps with the naïve assumption that norms, attitudes, awareness and emotions do not play a role in transmission of gender equality policies into implementation. However as it has been discussed, this thesis is rather placed in the grey land between these two which is highly influenced by norms, attitudes, awareness and emotions. Therefore, there is no clear cut between the two of them and thus, it is simply not purely an issue of either knowledge transmission or knowledge implementation. They both seem to be part of the issue on
the implementation of the gender equality policies and programming as well as that undefined normative space in between the two of them.

Hopefully, the identification and deconstruction of these barriers can be used in an enlightening way to reveal sites of improvement of implementation.

8.1 A BRIGHTER FUTURE ON THE HORIZON?
The finding and discussion chapters may have depicted somewhat a gloomy picture of the knowledge transmission and implementation on gender equality in humanitarian aid. Several barriers have been exposed which are not easily addressed.

Although, the participants related a lot of challenges they were optimistic. Nearly everyone referred to the past, arguing that they have achieved so much in these last two decades. The progress from not even talking about different needs for different people to always have it on the agenda is an advancement. For example, when gender was introduced to the humanitarian system it meant exclusively to improve women’s situations in humanitarian emergencies. Today, that has changed and several new aspects has been added into the work on gender equality in humanitarian emergencies, not the least the inclusion of men and boys. Following this progress, hopefully one day everyone will be included.

Thus, there has been progressed made and there is still belief that more will be done. Therefore, many of participants pointed out that though the humanitarian community does not today fully walk the walk it would be wrong to say that it has not achieved anything.

The normative element which influences the three dimensions of barriers has the potential to move the “talk” on gender equality in the humanitarian system to the “walk”. Systems theory explains that normative values are able to motivate and unify actors; thus if the humanitarian community succeeds to agree on gender equality as a norm then it can very well be the key to implementing gender equality programming.
Until that unification of values the tensions around gender equality will remain. However, this is not necessary only a bad thing. It is the tensions that will slowly push the humanitarian community towards this unification.

There are undoubtedly opportunities to take and advancement to make today for gender equality in humanitarian action through donors’ initiatives, inter-agency work and the introduction of accountability mechanisms as ECHO’s Gender Marker from 2014 which can monitor gender commitments made in the design phase. It will certainly take a long time but the future seems bright. As one participant (P4) optimistically but determined put it: “We have quite a struggle in front of us”.

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APPENDIX

Footnote 17

INTERVIEW GUIDE
Here follows example questions used in the interview guides for this thesis. It is important to note that since I conducted my interviews in a span of seven months the interview guide and its questions developed as I acquired knowledge on the subject. Thus, these questions represent questions used during the whole data collection but some more frequently than others:

1. How do you promote and implement gender equality in humanitarian emergencies and can this be done?
2. Do you think there is capacity today in the humanitarian community to implement gender equality policies in the field?
3. Have you experienced any friction or gap between what the headquarters wants to do on gender equality and what the field can do on the implementation of gender equality policies?
4. When you have arrived as an expert to the field how have the reaction been from the rest of staff in the field and how have they perceived your expertise?
5. What role do you think, as some people refer to as the gender community, play in implementation and advocacy for these kind of issues in the wider humanitarian community?
6. What kind of understanding have you experienced the humanitarian community has on ‘gender’?
7. Where do you think the humanitarian community stands today in promoting and implementing gender equality policies in its work? And where do you see it going?
8. What do you think needs to be improved for the advancement of the implementation of gender equality policies?