Farmer Family Learning Groups

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY AND EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT IN UGANDA

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Master of Human Security

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Ressumé

I Farmer Family Learning Groups (FFLG) projekterne i Uganda organiseres de lokale landmandsfamilier i grupper, som er omdrejningspunkt for fælles læring, vidensdeling, arbejde og udvikling. Med hjælp fra facilitatorer lærer medlemmerne om økologiske landbrugstekniker og fortalervirksomhed og arbejder sammen om at nå fælles mål. Gennem et praktikforløb hos Økologisk Landsforenings Ulandssekretariat i efteråret 2016 og et mini-feltarbejde i Uganda i Januar 2017 har jeg indsamlet kvalitativ og kvantitativ data om disse projekter og den tilgang til udviklingsarbejde som FFLG konceptet tilbyder.

Med udgangspunkt i begrebet Deltagelse (Participation) har jeg analyseret disse projekter og de resultater de har skabt i de lokalsamfund hvor grupperne arbejder. På trods af skarp kritik og mange diskussioner om begrebets anvendelighed, har Deltagelse indtaget en central position i udviklingsarbejde verden over, siden dets popularitet begyndte i begyndelsen af 1990erne. Deltagelse dækker over en række værdier og metoder til udviklingsarbejde, hvor der fokuseres på at inddrage alle de grupper der påvirkes af et projekt i både udvikling, implementering, monitorering og evaluering. Der lægges vægt på at udviklingsprojekter skal bygges op omkring de sårbare og fattige folks egne behov og prioriteter og give dem de redskaber der skal til for at de aktivt kan drive deres egen udvikling.

Dette speciale viser hvordan FFLG projekterne evner at overkomme mange af de svagheder der gennem tiden er blevet tilskrevet Deltagelse. Ved at inddrage landmandsfamilierne så meget som muligt i alle dele af projekterne og insistere på at tage udgangspunkt i *deres* problemer, lærer de grupperne at identificere svagheder, analysere dem og arbejde i fællesskab mod en løsning.

Projekterne har forbedret familiernes fødevaresikkerhed og økonomiske velstand og givet dem den nødvendige tekniske og praktiske viden de behøver for at drive bæredygtige økologiske landbrug. Gennem arbejdet i FFLG grupperne er der skabt en fællesskabsfølelse og sammenhold i landsbyerne og mange grupper arbejder aktivt for at forbedre deres tilværelse gennem samarbejde og videndeling.

FFLG metoden har vist at Deltagelse kan bidrage til væsentlig udvikling i lokalsamfund og forbedre levestandarden for de familier der er involveret i grupperne. Metoden har potentiale til at kunne udbredes til andre lande og verdensdele, med det mål at bringe de samme fremskridt til mange andre mennesker. Men der er behov for mere forskning og mere dybdegående etnografiske undersøgelser af projekterne, for at afdække hvordan metoden

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fungerer i praksis og hvor store forandringer den bidrager til, når det kommer til ændringer i magtbalancer og sociale strukturer.

Acknowledgements

I would like to say a thank you to the staff and members of the Global Organic Committee and Organic Denmark, for welcoming me into their world and sharing their knowledge with me. I am also deeply thankful to the dedicated and highly skilled members of NOGAMU, SATNET, Sulma Foods, Caritas Kampala, Africa 2000 Network, URDT, UWAMWIMA and TOAM, who work every day to spread their knowledge on organic farming and the FFLG approach, helping families across Uganda and Tanzania to move towards a better future.

A very special thank you goes to the Farmer Family Learning Groups in Iganga District in Uganda, who welcomed me with open arms and shared their stories with me. This thesis is written in appreciation of their hard work and the progress they make every day, lifting their families out of insecurity and being agents of change in their communities.

Last but not least, thank you to my friends, family and my wonderful boyfriend who have stood by me throughout my six years at Aarhus university and supported me every step of the way, lastly through the process of writing this thesis. Thank you for your patience, guidance and advice, and for encouraging me to keep going.

- Ida Staats Bilander

List of Abbreviations

· AESA – Agro-Ecological Systems Analysis

· ECOSAF – Empower Civil Society and Strengthen Food Security for Farmer Families

· ECOSOC – United Nations Economic and Social Council

· FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of The United Nations

· FFLG – Farmer Family Learning Group

· FFS – Farmer Field School

· GVA – Gross Value Added

· GDP – Gross Domestic Product

· HDI – Human Development Index

· IFAD – International Fund for Agricultural Development

· IFOAM – International Federation of Organic Farming Movements

· IO – Implementing Organisation

· MDG – Millennium Development Goals

· MO – Member Organisation (Ie. Member of SATNET or NOGAMU)

· NOGAMU – National Organic Agriculture Movement, Uganda

· NRM/A – National Resistance Movement/Army

· OD – Organic Denmark

· PRA – Participatory Rural Appraisal

· RSPN – Royal Society for the Protection of Nature, Bhutan

· SATNET – Sustainable Agriculture Trainers Network

· SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

· TOAM – Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement

· UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

· UPC – Uganda's People's Congress

· URDT – Uganda Rural Development and Training Programme

· UWAMWIMA – Vegetables and Fruits Farmers Association in Zanzibar

1.0 Introduction

I am sitting on the back of a motorcycle, driving out of Iganga town on my way to meet one of the local farmers, Mr. Patrick. The driver is my guide and translator, Mr. Yusuf, who have worked with the Farmer Family Learning Groups for several years now. As we drive out of the town, the bustling streets full of cars, minibuses and motorcycles gets more and more narrow, paved roads turns into dirt roads full of holes and furrows formed by runoff water. The densely populated town centre is noisy and busy and along every street are small stores selling clothes, vegetables, street food, sunglasses, furniture and everything in between. As we drive towards the outer skirts of the town, the shops are replaced by family houses, churches, mosques and primary schools, with more space between them.

Soon we are in the countryside, driving through agricultural land and small villages. When the small children who hangs around in groups in the courtyards see us, they jump to their feet and run after the motorcycle, waving and yelling "Mzungu! Mzungu!". Yusuf tells me it means "white lady", and here, like in the town, I feel like the object of attention wherever I go. Apart from these groups of children, the villages are quite and I do not see many people, apart from the gatherings around every borehole along the road, where people stand in line with their yellow plastic bottles, waiting to bring home the clean water. Chickens, goats and sometimes a single cow walks around freely on the side of the road.

After almost an hours bumpy, dusty drive, we arrive at Patricks farm. He shows me around while he explains everything we see with great enthusiasm. In a building next to his house, he is planning to have up to 50 chickens. He tells me, that before he joined the local FFLG group, he only had 6 chickens on his farm, today he has 30 and is planning to expand again, when the new henhouse is finished.

His farm is big and impressive; we walk through the courtyard and across the road, to his plantation. Walking among Orange trees, banana palms and cocoa trees, he tells me about the progress he has made during the last couple of years. He has cows, chickens, pigs and even six beehives standing in the shade of a large tree. Besides meat, milk and honey from his livestock, he produces many different crops and vegetables.

Patrick has worked as an external facilitator, with three different FFLGs for three years now. He tells me about the many advantages; they get higher yields from farming the same amount of land, they have fewer expenses, because they do not have to buy chemical fertilizers and

they get a lot of new knowledge about organic agriculture and agro-ecological techniques. He also praises the way the members have to work together to achieve their goals;

"*Because we are together, one can identify a problem, and the other members can help him, so it builds togetherness. And many activities are done together, when they have a common interest, they work together, they share together. But when you are alone you cannot do anything. But when you are together, you can do everything easily, without much strain*"

Patrick and his three FFLG groups, who I meet and talk to later that day, are not exceptional examples. Every group I met during my trip to Uganda, told me the same things; The members get bigger yields and have more food to eat, some have enough to sell their produce on the market and earn extra money and people now work better together, both within the households and in the groups. The members attribute these changes to the work of the FFLGs.

When I first read about these many improvements in evaluations reports from Organic Denmark (OD), I decided I wanted to investigate this phenomenon, the Farmer Family Learning Group, further. I asked myself; What is so special about this type of agricultural development work? Does it really bring such amazing results to the communities? And what is it, about this approach, that brings not only food security, but togetherness, friendship, knowledge sharing and trust? These thoughts were the starting point for writing this thesis.

Through an internship with Organic Denmark, project documents, phone interviews and a two-week trip to Uganda, I have gathered data about the FFLG approach, which will form the basis for this thesis. I have chosen to focus on the Iganga District in Eastern Uganda, where I visited eight FFLGs and several internal and external facilitators, conducting group- and individual interviews and field observations. As the thesis is not only concerned with the specific project taking place in Iganga District, but with the overall FFLG approach as well, I will draw on data which does not relate to specifically to this one area, but covers the work which have been done in all of Uganda, using this approach. The parts of my thesis concerning project results and group members own experiences is based on data from Iganga.

My intention in this thesis is to conduct a thorough analysis of the FFLG approach, a concept which has not been subject to any academic research so far. My problem statement is the following:

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I will analyse the participatory nature of the Farmer Family Learning Groups approach, based on some of the most significant critiques which have been raised about the concept of Participation. I will then analyse the results of the Farmer Family Learning Groups Projects in Iganga District, to find out whether the use of participatory development methods influence the kind of results they bring to the communities involved.

Based on these analyses I wish to show to what extend the FFLG approach is participatory, and whether this can be said to influence the effect it has, for the people involved in the projects. The approach has initially shown to bring a wide range of different improvements to the communities, and I wish to investigate whether this variety and the type of improvements they seem to bring, can be traced back to the way this approach deals with the subject of agricultural development.

In addition to the data I have collected, I have used various types of literature as the source of information in the process of writing this thesis. Thomas P. Ofcansky and Richard Reid have both written countless works on East Africa and Uganda. Between them they have almost 50 years of experience on the subject and have published more than 15 books and many more articles about African society, politics and history. These are the two main sources for information about Uganda.

Writing about the history of international development is a comprehensive task which might take up this entire thesis. In an attempt to capture more than 50 years of history in only one chapter, I have used a series of books about the subject, which all captures the most important theories and practices which have shaped this sector during the years. The authors of these books, Vandana Desai, Robert Potter, Gerard Van Bilzen, Damien Kingsbury and more, have all worked with the issue of international development for many years. While some have a background in development work, others have long academic careers working within the fields of human geography, politics and security, development etc.

The theoretical foundation of my work is based on some very influential scholars within the subject of Participatory Development. The much-cited and renowned Robert Chambers is perhaps one of the most famous scholars in the field. He has worked with international development in general and Participation in particular, since the 1960s and have also spend years working with the subject in Africa. Andrea Cornwall is a professor of anthropology and international development and have published two books and countless articles on the

subjects of participation, citizen involvement, development and gender. Trevor Parfitt is a professor of History, Politics and International Relations. He has been involved with research for the European Union and published more than 30 articles on subjects such as Participatory development, Aid effectiveness and development methodology. Other authors have contributed as well, but these are the most influential.

Participation will be the key analytical term, around which I base my analysis of the FFLG groups. It is a concept which, despite a long ranging debate and many critiques, is widely used within the world of development work, and as such it has been an integral part of the work of hundreds of organisations through the past two decades. Despite its frequent use, it is also a term which very few organisations and only some scholars offer a clear definition of. Based on everything I have read about Participation, I offer this definition;

Participation is;

- The active involvement of all stakeholders in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of developments projects
- A transformational process of *empowerment*, which builds up peoples' *capacity* to handle challenges and influence their own lives
- Achieved through methods such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which evolves around *sharing* of knowledge and skills, *mutual* learning and *cooperation*

(Chambers, 1994), (Desai & Potter, 2014) (Haslam, et al., 2012), (Mikkelsen, 2005), (Parfitt, 2004)

I will elaborate further on what Participation is and how it has been received within the world of development in chapter 6 and throughout the analysis in chapter 7.

This thesis consists of eight chapters. After this first introduction, chapter 2 provides background information about Uganda, its history and the socio-economic situation in the country today. It also contains a short introduction to the Iganga district where my fieldwork took place. Chapter 3 is about the FFLG approach, here I will explain how it was developed and the central values and methods on which it is built. In chapter 4, I present my data collection. I will explain the different methods I have used to gather information about the FFLGs and discuss these methods, how my data collection went and any strengths and weaknesses of the data I have.

Chapter 5 is an account of the history of international development work since the

second world war. This chapter will provide the historical and theoretical context for the concept of Participatory Development, which is explained in chapter 6. Here I present the most significant critiques which have been raised about a concept which is widespread within development work, but have also been subject to a lengthy discussion within the field, among both academics, policymakers and practitioners.

Chapter 7 contains the first part of my analysis. In this chapter, I look at how the FFLG approach deals with the critiques about Participatory Development, and seek to answer whether it can be described as a participatory approach, in a transformational sense. Chapter 8 provides the second part of the analysis. Based on the results which the FFLG projects have brought to the participating members and communities, I will analyse these to find out if they bring empowerment, and enable people to be an active agent in their own development, like Participatory Development is said to do. The ninth and final chapter contains the conclusion of the thesis.

Throughout this thesis, I use the terms Participation and Participatory development interchangeably to describe the specific approach to doing development work and the theories which it is based on. The terms International Development and Development Work are also used interchangeably, they refer to both the academic research and theories and the practical work and policy concerned with the subject of helping people in the global south towards improved livelihoods. The terms to not refer to the work of emergency relief done in cases of conflict or natural disasters.

1.1 The Human Security Framework

The Human security framework has its origin in the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report. In this report, UNDP advocates for the importance of Sustainable Human Development, as the main concept framing development work in the future;

"*Sustainable human development is development that not only generates economic growth but distributes its benefits equitably; that regenerates the environment rather than destroying it; that empowers people rather than marginalizing them. It is development that gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities and providing for their participation in decisions that affect their lives. It is development that is pro-people, pro-nature, pro-jobs and pro-women*"
(United Nations Development Programme, 1994)

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The report then goes on to outline the concept of Human Security, stating that a human-centred understanding of development issues is absolutely necessary if we want to overcome climate change, human rights violations, conflicts and overpopulation and other development issues (Ibid). The Human Security concept provides such an understanding.

Human Security is an attempt to reshape the concept of security, so that it is no longer narrowly understood as "national security from external aggression" or "protecting national interests in foreign policy". Instead security should be focusing on people, and how they can obtain security in their daily lives (Ibid). Shifting the focus away from international conflicts, nuclear war and national security interests, Human Security focuses on giving ordinary people a safe life, with access to basic resources and rights, it is about freedom from fear and freedom from want;

"*In the final analysis, human security is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced. Human security is not a concern with weapons-it is a concern with human life and dignity*"
(United Nations Development Programme, 1994)

The first quote offered above, not only tells us what Human Security is about, but points to its close connection to Participation, which is the central analytical term used in this thesis. Gaining recognition around the same time, the two concepts share the idea of "putting people first" in development, giving them the power to improve their lives and the abilities they need to do so. While Participatory development does not have to be viewed within a Human Security framework, and Human Security covers many more approaches and types of projects than just Participation, the two share values and principles which have characterised the development efforts since the beginning of the 1990s.

There are four basic principles and seven categories of human security. The four principles are; it is a *universal* concern; the components are *interdependent*; it is easier to ensure through *early prevention* than late intervention and it is *people-centred*. The many threats to Human Security can be divided into seven categories; Food-, Economic-, Health-, Environmental-, Personal-, Community-and Political Security (Ibid).

   I will not explain all of these in detail here, but I will return to some of them in my conclusion, where it will become clear how they are closely related to the topic of this thesis. What is important to understand is that these seven categories and the threats they contain

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cannot be seen as independent of each other; as the second principle above says; the components are interdependent. A threat to one category is very likely to be a threat to others as well, and improvement within one category will also bring improvement in others (Ibid). For example, environmental degradation is an issue within the category of environmental security, but it might cause poor soil fertility, lack of water or contamination, which then harms peoples' food production. Food Insecure people are more likely to become ill, which threatens their health security. And the domino-effects goes on.

Throughout this thesis, we will see that the subject of the FFLG approach and Participatory Development is closely related to this human-centred concern with development. Although I have chosen not to use the Human Security concept in my analysis, it provides the conceptual framework for the entire research.

2.0 Uganda

Uganda is an East African Country located just north of Lake Victoria, landlocked between Rwanda and Tanzania to the south, Kenya to the east, Sudan to the north and The Democratic Republic of Congo to the west (Ofcansky, 1999). The capital city is Kampala, a city where modern skyscrapers, large banks and hotels lies side by side with more modest shags selling everything from mobile phones to bananas and rice. The streets in the cities are incredibly busy, full of cars, minibuses and countless motorcycles, but very few traffic lights. When you move out of the cities, the beautiful Ugandan nature meets your eye. Vast hills and green fields covers the land, but only until the next little village comprised of wooden or mud brick houses, a few stores and muddy roads. In the Villages, smaller fields accompany each house, here many different crops stand side by side; bananas, pineapples, large jackfruit trees and cassava are grown next to maize, onions and herbs.

These are the first impressions that meets you, when you arrive via the international airport in Entebbe. Based on my own observations from my visit to Uganda, together with statistics and historical accounts, this section seeks to give an introduction to the country, which sets the scene for this thesis. In the following sections I will provide a brief overview of the political and economic history of the country since it gained its independence, followed by an outline of the agricultural sector and food security situation of the country today.

Uganda has a short but violent history as an independent nation, beginning in 1962 when the country gained its independence from the British. It had been a British protectorate since 1894. In the pre-colonial era, Uganda consisted of several different kingdoms, all with their

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own ethnicity, language and culture (Ofcansky, 1999). Today, this historical background is still evident, as Uganda is a country with great ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity. According to the National Population and Housing Survey from 2014, there are over 60 different ethnic groups in Uganda, and although Swahili and English are the two official languages, the ethnic diversity is also evident in the many languages spoken across the country (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

When you drive around the country, especially in the smaller towns and villages, you see churches and mosques wherever you go. Often located with only a few houses in between, these religious centres are a sign of the diversity of the people living there. More than 80% of the population are Catholics, Anglicans or Muslims, the former being the largest group of about 40%, the rest believes in other religions, some indigenous to the area. Uganda is the worlds' youngest country, today nearly 50% of the population is under 15 years old and despite campaigns for planned parenthood and increasing living standards, the country still battles rapid population growth (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

2.1 From Dictatorship to Political Stability

After gaining its independence in 1962 Uganda experienced decades of instability and violence, struggling to unite the ethnically diverse country. The first post-independence government which was led by Milton Obote was characterised by years of political power struggles and division between his party, Ugandas People's Congress (UPC) and Buganda, one of the original kingdoms in the region. In 1966, following political uprising by the opposition, Obote suspended the 1962 constitution, and declared Uganda a republic in an attempt to cement his position as leader. But Obotes time in power did not last long, in 1971 he was overthrown by military Major General Idi Amin (Maxon, 2009).

This coup marked the beginning of nearly a decade of brutal conflict in Uganda, with Idi Amin as dictator (Ofcansky, 1999). Idi Amin had control of the military and ruled the country with violence and force. Fighting the Ugandan people and any threat to his position, real or imagined, Amin and his military supporters conducted terrible mutilations, torture and mass killings (Ibid). During Amins rule he expelled the large Asian community from the country, the national economy fell into ruins, while government services deteriorated. Amins expanding military operations and increasingly violent regime finally came to an end in 1979 following the invasion of Uganda by the united Tanzanian forces and exiled opposition members, among these pro-Obote groups (Ofcansky, 1999). However, political instability,

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civil disorder and financial troubles continued to plaque the country in the following years, under the rule of shifting governments, among these Milton Obote, who began his second presidential period in 1980 (Maxon, 2009).

Following a guerrilla war and conflict within the military, Obote was overthrown and forced into exile in 1985. The following year, Yoweri Museveni who had led the National Resistance Movement/Army (NRM/A) against Obote became President (Ofcansky, 1999). Even though Museveni met resistance and uprising during the first years in office, the security situation in Uganda slowly began to improve, as he proclaimed that national reconciliation and stability was the new governments' top priorities (Maxon, 2009). Museveni is still the president of Uganda today and the country has experienced growth and overall stability during the last twenty years. Though there are still instabilities in the northern regions, and the country struggles to heal from its violent past (Maxon, 2009).

Since the early 1990s Uganda has experienced high economic growth, between the years of 2000 and 2010 the average GDP growth was at 7,3%, since then it has slowed to around 5% a year (The World Bank, 2016). The government has been successful in implementing a series of structural reforms and investing in large public infrastructure projects, as well as secure stability within the country's economy (Ibid). The greatest threats to continuous growth is climatic changes and instability in the surrounding region, especially in South Sudan and The Democratic Republic of Congo. On a national level there are problems with corruption and public service effectiveness (The World Bank, 2016).

2.2 Agriculture and Food Security

Agriculture is a very important part of Uganda's economy and society. The agricultural sector comprises approximately 27% of the GVA, but employs more than 70% of the population (UN Data, 2017). Most of these people are self-employed, working on small subsistence farms. The average amount of land under cultivation in each household was 2.9 HA in 2012 (The World Bank, 2016).

Each household has a few banana palms and cassava plants planted in the courtyard in front of the house, and it is quite normal to see cows, goats and chickens walking freely around the houses and along the roads. Because the majority of the population are subsistence farmers, most of the crops produced goes to household or regional consumption, while only a few percent are used for export. The main crops are maize, beans, matooke and cassava, used for consumption, while exported crops are usually coffee, sun flower and sugar

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(Ibid). Although most agriculture is done on a small scale by farmer families, you also see the signs of largescale industrial farming everywhere you go. In between the villages are big fields of cotton, tea, coffee, eucalyptus and cassava, neatly planted in straight lines.

Most of the 70% of the population who works in the agricultural sector do not have any formal education or training and might have little knowledge of proper agricultural practices and techniques. The government provides agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizer and pesticides as well as extension services, which covers training in agriculture and related subjects. The latest Uganda Census of Agriculture shows that only 19% of the households who responded had been visited by extension staff within the last 12 months, while around 18% had received agricultural inputs (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Most people receive new knowledge about agriculture from other farmers in the area or via the radio (Ibid).

In addition to the lack of extension services and technical knowledge among the farmers, most households have limited access to markets and credit and lack proper storage facilities and means of transportation (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2010). It is not unusual to see groups of young men transporting agricultural products over long distances, stacked in huge piles on bicycles and motorcycles, spending hours to get from the village to the markets in town. Once you move outside of the bigger towns, you meet only very few cars on the roads, which are usually muddy and full of holes.

According to the Global Hunger Index from 2016 the food security situation in Uganda is "serious" with a quarter of the population being undernourished and almost 35% of children showing signs of stunting, which is an indication of early malnutrition (Global Hunger Index, 2016). There are many different factors influencing the critical food security situation in the country; poverty, drought, low dietary diversity, unsafe drinking water and lack of sanitation can all lead to malnutrition and hunger (World Food Programme, 2013). When I visited the country in January 2017, there had not been any proper rainfall for more than six months, as the last rainy season had never really happened. The dry conditions were evident everywhere; the soil was parched, dust was hanging in the air and most plants had brown, withered leaves.

There are small regional differences in food insecurity in Uganda, the situation being worst in the Northern regions which are experiencing conflicts, droughts and a high number of refugees from neighbouring countries (Ibid). Low dietary diversity is a big problem, especially among rural Ugandans who have limited access to the markets in the cities. The typical diet for poor rural households is based on a few staple foods such as maize, matooke

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and cassava, it fails to meet their nutritional needs as it often lacks protein and vitamins (World Food Programme, 2013).

2.3 Iganga District

My research for this thesis took place in Iganga district in the South Eastern Region of Uganda. The climate in this region is tropical, with two annual rainy seasons, one between March and May and the second between October and November. The district has a hilly terrain, 70% of which is agricultural land and only around 5% is covered by forest (Iganga District Government, 2009). Most of the hilly landscape is covered with different crops, while patches of forest and wetland appears in between. Cotton, tea and eucalyptus trees dominates large fields, which are divided by rows of trees and bushes indigenous to the area.

The district has a population of approximately 500.000, 60% of which are under twenty years old (Iganga District Government, 2009). Like in the rest of Uganda, the majority of the population lives in rural areas and are employed in subsistence farming, growing coffee, cotton, vanilla and cocoa as cash crops, and maize, cassava, beans, sweet potato and banana for household consumption (Ibid.). It is estimated that almost half the population lives below the national poverty line (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

There is quite detailed statistical information available about the socio-economic situation in the district, which shows that most of the people in Iganga lives in small houses build of mud and wooden poles or homemade clay bricks, with rammed mud floors and metal sheet roofs. This corresponds to what I experienced during my stay there. The houses are small, with one or two rooms and not many windows. Some have small outhouses nearby, while most are surrounded by a courtyard, where most of the daily activities like cooking, washing and tending the animals are carried out. Around the courtyards are small groups of tress, usually banana palms, jackfruit or mango. Some houses have a small field nearby where the families grow their crops, others have their fields located on the outskirts of the village.

Only around 4% of the population in Iganga district have access to electricity and most people derive drinking water from nearby wells or boreholes (Iganga District Government, 2009). There are some 60 healthcare centres in the districts, which have to cover the entire

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population of 500.000 people. This means that there is one doctor for every 41.000 citizen and 1:10.000 when it comes to nurses. The most common cause of illness in the area is malaria (Ibid.). The healthcare clinic in Iganga town, which I had the pleasure of experiencing myself, is small and ill-equipped and the rooms are dirty. From very early in the morning, long queues of people are sitting in the hallway, waiting to see the doctor.

3.0 The Farmer Family Learning Groups Approach

In this chapter I will describe the development of the FFLG approach, its core values and the participatory practices used in it. The insight and knowledge I have gained about the nature of the approach comes from several different sources, which serves as the data for this chapter and the rest of the thesis.

During the years, Organic Denmark has published some teaching materials and articles and a single booklet about FFLGs. The booklet "The Rwenzori Experience: The Farmer Family Learning Groups Approach to Human and Social Capital Building, Environmental Care and Food Sovereignty" and the facilitator training guide "Farmer Family Learning Groups for Community Development" are both written in a collaboration between Mette Vaarst, who worked for Organic Denmark at the time, Aage and Inge Lis Dissing who are members of the Global Organic Committee, Jane Nalunga, employee at the secretariat of NOGAMU and Thaddeo Tibasiima who is a training officer at SATNET. They have all been part of the work of developing the FFLG approach from the very beginning and have in-depth knowledge of the daily work in the groups.

In addition to these papers, the project proposals and external evaluations of each project has provided much information about the approach. During my internship at Organic Denmark I spend many hours discussing the FFLG groups and the approach behind the projects with staff and members of the Global Organic Committee, which allowed me to gain a thorough understanding of the ideas behind the approach and how it works in practice. Together, all of this information forms the basis for everything written about the FFLG approach in this thesis. At this time, these has been no published academic papers or research about the FFLG approach, besides a master thesis written by a Danish student of Agricultural Development in 2012, about social learning within the groups.

In 2008 Organic Denmark carried out an appraisal in western Uganda in collaboration with National Organic Agriculture Movement Uganda (NOGAMU) and Agriculture Trainers Network (SATNET). The goal was to develop a model for farmer training, inspired by the

Farmer Field School concept (FFS) (Vaarst, et al., 2012). The FFS concept was originally developed in Asia as an alternative extension approach focusing on developing "best practices" of agricultural management, involving the smallholder farmers in the process. In the FFS approach, the farmers meet once a week at a demonstration farm to learn about new agricultural techniques, by observing the differences between conventional practices and other alternative practices (FAO, 2017).

The team send out by OD to carry out the appraisal, found that the FFS concept had several shortcomings, which they wanted to address in the development of the new approach. First of all, the use of a demonstration plot meant that it was often difficult for the farmers to apply the new practices they had learned on their own farms, because the context on the homestead might be different from that at the demonstration plot. This made technology transfer insufficient. Secondly, the FFS approach did not manage to create successful farmer groups among the participants, perhaps due to the fact that they only met once a week, and members might live in different villages. Third, the training received through these projects followed a specific curriculum, but this did not always correspond to what the farmers perceived as their main challenges and needs (Vaarst, et al., 2011). It became a core focus to mitigate these challenges in the new approach.

Based on field work carried out in the Rwenzori region, the team developed the Farmer Family Learning Groups Approach and in May 2009, the first facilitator trainings marked the beginning of the first FFLG project (Vaarst, et al., 2012). Since then, OD and its partner organizations has carried out six projects in regions across Uganda and in 2013 the approach was extended further when the first project in Zanzibar, Tanzania began. As of 2017, OD is working together with The Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) in Bhutan to develop similar projects adjusted to a Bhutanese context.

3.1 Participatory Farmer Groups

The FFLG approach is based on the idea that every farmers farm is unique, and should therefore be the point of origin of all agricultural training. Instead of using a demonstration farm, groups of 15-30 members are formed within the villages, where all training and work takes place on the members' own farms (Vaarst, et al., 2011). All family members are encouraged to be members of the FFLGs and participate in working on the farms. Each group has an external facilitator, and experienced agricultural extension worker who has received training in organic farming, facilitation and the FFLG approach. The External facilitators typically work with 3-5 groups each. Each group selects a member from within

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the group to be their internal facilitator, who is in charge of facilitating meetings, planning rotational visits and training. The internal facilitator also receives training from the external facilitator so that he or she can take over the group once the external facilitator leaves to form new groups elsewhere (Vaarst, et al., 2012).

Instead of working with a curriculum or fixed teaching plan, the training conducted through the FFLG projects is completely derived from the farmers' own challenges and needs. In addition to the training received from the external facilitator, the members gain new knowledge through knowledge-sharing within the groups, which is a fundamental component of the approach. When a group has identified a challenge, for example a specific pest attacking their tomato plants, they first discuss the problem in the groups, allowing everyone with knowledge and experience to share this with the other members, perhaps identifying a solution among themselves. If this does not happen, they then request training on the subject from the facilitator. In this way, all the knowledge that already exist within the group is shared among all members and the training they receive is relevant and relates directly to the challenges they are facing on their own farms (Vaarst, et al., 2012).

One focus area when Organic Denmark developed the approach was that it should be designed to be flexible and adjustable to any context, so that it best fits the needs of the farmers involved, at any given time or place (Vaarst, et al., 2011). This was done by emphasizing the importance of the farmers making their own decisions; each group decides how often they want to meet and for how long, what they want to discuss at each meeting and which crops they want to focus on, if they decide to grow any crops together in the group. The members should be involved in any decision and free to leave their mark on the groups work. This flexibility and the fact that the farmers have a great deal of influence and self-determination is intended to ensure ownership and

commitment among group members (Vaarst, et al., 2011).

One important element of the work in the FFLGs is the rotational visits. During these visits the group visit a host farmer, who gives them a tour around the farm, explains to them what his (or her) plans are, what challenges he has and how he would like them to help him. The group then engages in a discussion of the issues raised by the host farmer, trying to find solutions and give advice. Again, the focus is on sharing the knowledge that already exists in the group. During these visits, all members in the group work together to fulfil a task chosen by the host farmer. This is typically a larger project on the farm that he or she needs help with, such as building a fence, preparing a new field or constructing a building. Working together in the group like this, is intended to ensure that the farmers can take on larger projects than they usually would, as 30 workers can carry out very big tasks in only a few hours.

The FFLG approach was developed based on the core principles of Respect, Trust, Equality, Common Learning and Commitment and it has a participatory, dialogue based, practical approach to learning. The external training, as requested by the group, is carried out in a practical manner, using the farmers own fields, tools etc. in the training and their own homes as the context for the trainings (Vaarst, et al., 2012).

The FFLG approach was specifically developed with the aim of teaching organic farming, and is based on the four principles of organic agriculture, as set out by IFOAM in 2005:

1) The Principle of Health:
   Organic Agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible.
2) The Principle of Ecology:
   Organic Agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.
3) The Principle of Fairness:
   Organic Agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.
4) The Principle of Care:
   Organic Agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment.
   (IFOAM, 2017)

Organic agriculture is both very knowledge intensive and labour intensive and requires many skills if it is to be successful. The FFLG approach was developed to deal with this, by focusing on knowledge- and labour-sharing among the farmers.

3.2 The ECOSAF Projects

At the end of the first SATNET project, it was clear to Organic Denmark and its partner organisations that the project had brought many positive changes to the participating farmer families. In the external evaluation, several changes were highlighted; capacity building and training of local agricultural extension workers, more knowledge about and use of organic agroecological methods, a bigger variety of crops grown, families were more food secure and there had been improvements on sanitation and hygiene within the villages. In addition to this, the groups reported that members now worked together and helped each other more than before (Ingvagri Ltd., 2014).

After the initial success of the first FFLG project in western Uganda, Organic Denmark spread the approach to other regions of the country, with the commencement of the ECOSAF project in 2013. The project was implemented together with NOGAMU and four civil society organizations, each of them working in one of the targeted regions of Uganda (Invagri Ltd, 2015). After the first two-year project period, the work was extended for another two years with the ECOSAF 2 project (Organic Denmark, 2015). The ECOSAF Project introduced the FFLG approach to existing farmer groups in three regions and several districts of Uganda; Wakiso and Luwero districts in Central Uganda, Hoima, Kyenjojo, Kygegwa and Kibale districts in Mid-Western Uganda and Iganga, Kaliro, Pallisa and Namutamba districts in mid-eastern Uganda. The area in focus in my research was Iganga (Organic Denmark, 2015; Organic Denmark, 2015). The ECOSAF projects main objective is to introduce the FFLG approach to existing farmer groups and establish new groups, strengthen and develop the approach and thereby strengthen food security and sovereignty for the involved farmers, as well as build capacity and advocacy among the groups. (Invagri Ltd, 2015).

4.0 Data Collection and Methodology

4.1 Internship and the first Data Collection

During the fall of 2016 I did an internship at the Danish organization Organic Denmark, which lasted for 3.5 months. Organic Denmark is an organization for both producers, companies and consumers within the organic sector. They provide consultancy services and

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develop projects within the areas of organic agricultural production and marketing and their vision is "to develop a world that thinks and act organic – for the benefit of people, animals and the earth" (my own translation) (Økologisk Landsforening, 2015). Organic Denmark's main focus is on the Danish producers and market, but they have a small international department called Ulandsudvalget or the Global Organic Committee, who are working to spread organic agriculture and improve food security in developing countries, through development projects in East Africa (Ulandssekretariatet, 2015). This is where my internship took place.

The first part of my data for this thesis was collected during my internship. My work tasks included writing a report about the FFLG approach, gathering all the knowledge and experiences about the approach which exists today, eight years after it was developed. During the job of writing the report I conducted 8 interviews over the phone, with staff members and external facilitators from NOGAMU and SATNET, and the IOs Sulma Foods, Caritas Kampala, Africa 2000 Network, URDT, UWAMWIMA and TOAM. These are the organizations which have been responsible for the implementation of the FFLG projects in Uganda and Tanzania since 2008, from here on referred to as IOs. In addition to the 8 interviews, I also gathered written responses from 3 other informants who were unable to conduct interview over the phone. These 11 interviews all revolved around the FFLG approach, its effects and results, the main challenges involved with working with it and its main strengths and weaknesses, and they comprise the first part of my data. The interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews, based on an interview guide with 16 questions which I had written prior to beginning the data collection.

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews, because this method is well suited for situations where you only have one opportunity to do an interview with someone. Informal or unstructured interviews are well suited for long-term fieldwork, but in this case, I had to collect as much data as possible during a single one-hour interview with each respondent. Semi-structured interviews are based on an interview guide, which ensures that you cover the same topics in all the interviews, while it leaves room for inquiries, whenever something of interest comes up during the interview. In this way, you get comparable qualitative data (Bernard, 2013).

Even though these interviews were conducted as part of my internship and the work of writing the report for Organic Denmark, they corresponded with the subject of my thesis

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and I had the opportunity to add questions which would be relevant for my research, which makes them relevant as part of my data for this thesis. The informants for these 11 interviews worked for several different implementing organisations (IOs) from all of Uganda and Zanzibar, whereas my research and thesis focuses on only two districts of Uganda. Despite of this difference in geographical focus, they are still relevant as they are about the main structure and work of the FFLG approach. Part of my analysis will focus on how the FFLG approach is designed when it comes to using participatory techniques and spreading the principles of participation within the IOs. For this part of the analysis, the data gathered during my internship is particularly relevant. If I had only talked to FFLG members, I would no have been able to gain insight about the organisational structures and their attitudes towards participation. Only 3 of the informants were from Zanzibar, Tanzania and the rest from Uganda. The informants from Uganda has worked with the approach for several years and covered hundreds of different FFLG groups, giving them an in-depth knowledge of the approach and the changes it has brought.

4.2 Fieldwork and Data Collection in Iganga, Uganda

In January 2017, I travelled to Uganda to conduct the remaining part of my research for this thesis. Because the focus of my research is not just to look at the FFLG approach from an organizational point of view, but also from the perspective of the benefitting farmer families, it was important to add to the data I had already conducted. During my two-week trip to Uganda I stayed in Iganga town, which is the district capital of Iganga district. From there I travelled out to the surrounding villages to meet the FFLG groups. The initial plan was to visit two groups a day, with the goal of conducting at least 12 group interviews and some individual interviews. Unfortunately, I got ill after only 4 days, and was forced to spend the next 5 days in my hotel, unable to visit any groups during that time. My illness caused me several days in the field and because of that it was not possible to gather as much data as I had initially planned.

During the last couple of days of my stay in Iganga, I visited 2-3 groups a day and also made some visits to local external and internal facilitators. By the time of my journey home I had conducted 8 group interviews and 5 individual interviews. During my visits to the groups I also did informal interviews with the members, as they showed me around their homes and fields. This allowed me to have casual conversations with them about their farming, families and daily lives, and thereby build rapport before conducting the more formal, group interviews. Together with my own fieldnotes, observations, informal

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conversations and pictures, these interviews comprise the second part of my data for this thesis.

Group interviews have been widely used within the social sciences, but also in areas such as advertising research. Here, it is important to distinguish between the type of group interviews I conducted during my research, and the type called *focus* groups. Focus groups are often used in combination with qualitative methods such as surveys. They can be with groups of people who are strangers or know each other well before the interview, for example a group of consumers who come together to discuss a certain product, or a high school class discussing the effectiveness of anti-smoking campaigns (Bernard, 2013).

Group interviews are especially useful when you wish to gather a large amount of data in a short period of time, and it also allows the researcher to observe group members' interactions with each other, and their reactions to other peoples' thoughts and opinions, something that would not be possible in other interviews situations (LeComte, et al., 1999). For these reasons, group interviews seemed the best option in my situation. One should keep in mind that

"The results of the [group] interview are best understood and interpreted in the context of other data on the community or situation in question"
(LeComte, et al., 1999)

As explained earlier, I have documents, individual interviews and field observations as well, which allows me to compare the finding of the different kinds of data and methods used.

The FFLG groups who were part of my research had between 25-35 members. All but one, which was a womens group, had both male and female members, in most groups there was an equal number of each gender. They crossed all age groups, from young teenage boys to elderly women. In some groups the children also attended the meetings, although they did not take part in the interviews. As mentioned earlier, the FFLG approach encourages the entire family to participate, which corresponds to what I experienced.

4.3 Discussion of Data

As mentioned earlier, I expected to be able to gather more data during my trip to Uganda, than I actually did. Because of the short time I spend there and the limited amount of secondary data available about this specific project and the FFLG approach, it is important to be aware of the limitations of my data when analysing it. There are several things that

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speaks to the credibility and usefulness of the data I have, but also some shortcomings and limitations which are important to have in mind.

The data I have collected, both during my internship and the visit to Iganga, represents informants of all age groups and genders. In addition to this, my informants included both married couples, unmarried men and women of all age groups and elders. Some of the informants were village leaders, some were experienced farmers with many hectares of land, orchards and different kinds of livestock while others were poorer, more inexperienced farmers with only a few small fields near their homestead. My data therefore represents a diverse group of smallholder farmers, which is important in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the studied field. The people I interviewed during my internship represents the IOs and partner organisations involved with the FFLG project, which gives a broader perspective of the projects, than if only the beneficiaries had contributed to the data.

The individual interviews I conducted in Iganga were all with external or internal facilitators, people who hold a leadership position within the groups. I did get to speak to the other group members individually during our farm visits, but only conducted more structured interviews with them in groups. An individual interview allows you to get more in-depth information about someone's life and experiences, but because very few of the members speak English, I chose only to do individual interviews with the facilitators who did (Bernard, 2013). Because of this, much of the information I gathered from the other group members is not as detailed and exhaustive as desired. Paired with the fact that I had very little time in the field to observe the members' everyday life and get to know them, this does make my data somewhat limited when it comes to detailed information about how the members live and work with the FFLG approach.

Despite of these limitations, I will argue that the data I have available is credible and useful when it comes to analysing the results and effects of the FFLG projects. This is especially due to the fact that there is a lot of consistency in my data. The different FFLGs told me similar stories of how their lives had changed as a result of being members of the groups and this information corresponds with the data gathered from the IOs and the external evaluation reports of the projects. I was also able to see for myself the new buildings, livestock and fields the members had acquired after joining the groups, and I could compare their crops and living conditions to others on the surrounding villages.

When analysing any data, qualitative or quantitative, it is important to be aware of what Bernard calls "response effects". These are

"Measurable differences in the responses of people being interviewed that are predictable from characteristics of the interviewers or those being interviewed – like whether the sex or age or race of the interviewer and the respondent are the same or different – and dozens of other things"
(Bernard, 2013)

Often, is you want to analyse whether the sex, age or race of either the interviewer or the respondent influences the kind of answers given in an interview, you will have to compare answers from an interview conducted by for example a woman, with the answers from the same interview conducted by a man (Ibid). Off course, this has not been possible for me, as I was the only one conducting interviews for this research. However, there are ways to look for response effects in my data, which can provide a clue about whether I have gotten significantly different answers than another interviewer would have. Here, the external evaluation reports and my interviews with local male facilitators are useful. The evaluation reports are conducted by professional data-collectors from Ugandan survey companies. I am, therefor, able to look at the responses in these reports and the things the facilitators have been told by group members, which are answers given to local men, and compare whether they are different than those given to me, a western, white woman.

It is very likely that the local group members act differently around me, than they would around a local researcher, but it is impossible to know *how* without a long-term fieldwork using several different interviewers. When I compare the findings of the evaluation reports with my own, I have not been able to observe any remarkable differences in the answers given. It is likely that the subject of the research, the FFLG approach, does not provide many response effects, because the subject is not very controversial. Bernard writes that, you are more likely to find response effects when asking questions about more controversial or private subjects, such as race, sex habits or political orientation (Ibid).

The discussion above shows the strengths and weaknesses of the data used to write this thesis. It is important to be aware of what ones data can and cannot be used for, to avoid jumping to conclusions or generalising when analysing it. My data does not give a comprehensive picture of the everyday lives of the farmers, their relationships with each other, between group members or within families. To gain an understanding of this, one would have to spend a lot more time with the groups, participating in their everyday lives

and working activities. It does however provide a lot of information about the changes brought about by the FFLG projects, the members farming activities and livelihoods in general. Although I was not able to observe it myself, I also have the members own stories about how their relationships and feelings of togetherness in the villages have changed.

5.0 International Development Through the Years

International development as we know it today is a product of decades of development projects, discussions among scholars and practitioners, adapting to changing ideologies and political contexts. In this section I will introduce the history of development work, its economic and political contexts and focus areas. When looking at developments projects today, it is important to know their historical background, in order to understand how and why development is done the way it is.

The act of helping countries and people less fortunate than others, whether poorer or struck by conflict or natural disasters goes back hundreds of years. Some of the largest international NGOs today was founded over a hundred years ago, such as Red Cross in 1863 and Save the Children in 1919 (Kingsbury, et al., 2012). In the early days, such organisations often focused on helping victims of war, while others, such as the Christian Missionaries sought to spread the word of the bible, while helping people in developing countries (Ibid). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a full historical overview, which is why the next section will focus on development in the decades from the end of the Second World War up until today.

The literature about the history of development divides the past 70 years into different eras, some in decades, others in 20-30 year periods of different ideologies. Common for all of them is that there is a major shift around the end of the cold war and again with the new millennia. I have chosen this division, and have come up with three categories; The Cold War decades from 1940-1990, the 1990s and the new millennium from 2000 until now.

5.1 The End of the Second World War, and the Cold War Decades

Many agree that the end of the Second World War marks the beginning of international development in the form it is today. In the years after the war, the US played an important role in helping European countries recover, and much of their development assistance was directed towards Europe. During the same time, the idea that "developed" countries had an obligation to help "underdeveloped" countries began to spread. In President Truman's

Inauguration Address in 1949 he addressed the issue in his famous Four Point speech; That the developed nations must help the people of the underdeveloped countries by sharing their technical and scientific knowledge and work to achieve growth of productivity and industrialisation (Gilbert Rist, 2014).

The geopolitical situation of the post-war era very much influenced the field of development in the next fifty years. A bipolar world order was developing, with the "free" capitalist/western nations on one side, and the communist nations on the other, led by the Soviet Union (Van Bilzen, 2015). At the same time the decolonisation process began, with the US pushing for independence of the colonies, while the colonial powers in Europe where less willing to let go of their territories. The first colonies gained independence during the 1940s; Lebanon, The Philippines, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Burma and Indonesia. Others followed in the following decades, although the process of decolonisation was far from peaceful (Ibid).

International assistance to developing countries was very much influenced by political and military agendas, as the Third World became an "ideological battleground" for the richer countries in the north (Gilbert Rist, 2014). The US and many European countries were concerned with preventing more countries from becoming communist or socialist, while at the same time viewing economic development of the poorer countries as a necessity, as expressed in the Gray Report from 1950;

"Economic stagnation, political unrest and extreme poverty of most underdeveloped countries represent a growing threat to the rest of the free world [...] The need for economic development and progress in these areas becomes daily more pressing, not only for their own welfare, but for the security and the wellbeing of all the free nations" (Van Bilzen, 2015)

Countries such as France and the UK focused on providing assistance to their former and current colonies (Van Bilzen, 2015).

A focus on economic growth and industrialisation shaped the development projects of the 1940s and ´50s. Most projects focused on providing technological assistance, investing in local administration and building large infrastructure projects such as dams, port, railways and energy plants. It was believed that economic growth would follow an expansion of the industrial sector, which should be build using excess labour from the agricultural sector, which was viewed as being backward and unproductive (Ibid). There was a sense of optimism

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during these two decades; the western countries believed that it was possible to eradicate hunger and misery and bring economic growth, perhaps within only a few decades (Kingsbury, et al., 2012). The US was by far the largest contributor of international aid during the first years, but as European countries began to recover from the war, their contributions grew (Ibid).

By the end of the 1960s, critique and concern about the development approach which had influenced the previous years began to spread. It became clear that a "quick fix" solution to hunger and misery was impossible, and the realisation began to spread, that a focus on long-term strategies was necessary (Van Bilzen, 2015). Instead of relying on a "trickle down" effect of economic growth, it was time to change the focus and try to reach the majority of the poor people in developing countries, whom many believed had been overlooked until then.

What became known as the "Basic Needs" approach was first suggested by Robert McNamara, the President of the World Bank, in 1972. He called for a greater priority to basic human needs such as nutrition, housing, health, literacy and employment. Despite this change in focus, the ultimate goal was still to increase production and economic growth and the investments in large scale projects remained. (Gilbert Rist, 2014). Projects began to arise in new sectors such as agricultural development and health and education as poverty reduction among the vast rural population was now in focus. However, with this change, the projects became much more complex and unpredictable than recent years large infrastructure projects (Kingsbury, et al., 2012).

The focus on basic needs did not last long. The international debt crisis in the 1980s had a devastating impact on developing countries, as their exports dropped and interest rates increased dramatically. Together with higher oil prices this caused serious debt problems in many countries, who by the beginning of the decade realised that they were unable to meet their repayment obligations (Van Bilzen, 2015). With Ronald Reagan as President of the United States and Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in Britain, market fundamentalism and neoliberal economic models set their mark on international politics, and with that, on international development. The decade of Structural Adjustment had begun (Gray, 2017). Previous decades had failed to lift the majority of the developing worlds' populations out of poverty, and contributed to developing countries being dependant on foreign assistance and in serious debt. It was believed that major economic reforms focusing on privatisation and

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deregulation in the developing countries would help (Ibid). Through these reforms, the national governments of the developing countries should push to privatize publicly owned enterprises, remove tariffs and other limitations to international free trade and roll back the role of the state by cutting down on subsidies in sectors such as agriculture and cutting government expenditure on health, education and water sectors (Haslam, et al., 2012). International assistance during these years was granted with tight restrictions and conditions about structural adjustments in recipient countries (Ibid).

These structural adjustment reforms soon proved to be a failure when it came to reducing poverty, and it became clear that they yielded negative side effects, especially for the majority of the population in developing countries; the most poor and vulnerable. Poverty deepened, prices on essential food increased and the rural producers suffered under the removal of extension services. Along with famines, the spread of HIV/Aids, droughts and violent conflicts, all of these factors proved that the situation of the developing countries was worse than ever.

5.2 The Post-Cold War Era; Human Development in the 1990s:

The end of the Cold War also marked the end of the bipolar world order that had ruled for the past 50 years. With this change on the international political scene, development assistance was no longer tied to geopolitical considerations and military concerns as it had been for decades (Van Bilzen, 2015). The beginning of the 1990s was a time of hope in the international development arena. Many believed that with the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, large sums would be released from military budgets and directed towards development assistance. However, despite a slight increase in spending during the first years of the decade, international aid decreased throughout the rest of the 1990s (Gilbert Rist, 2014).

Development work in this new era can roughly be described by two terms; "Human Development" and "Good Governance". Despite the failures of the structural adjustment reform of the 1980s, it was still believed that it was necessary to correct the structural weaknesses of the developing countries, but it was now done with a different focus; democratisation, poverty reduction and support of the social sector (Van Bilzen, 2015). The idea of supporting Good Governance covered a broad range of areas in the developing countries:

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"*Key elements of a good governance approach included economic liberalism, civil service reform, increasing accountability, transparency, political pluralism, participation, decentralization, democracy, social justice, respect of human rights, freedom of expression and association, upholding the rule of law*"
(Van Bilzen, 2015).

These underlying ideas of democracy and Human Rights that ruled the development agenda largely influenced the distribution of aid; while much assistance was now tied with conditions related to these ideas, development assistance was cut back or stopped all together, to countries who violated Human Rights or was considered undemocratic (Ibid).

The second big theme of the 1990s was that of Human Development. After the realisation that previous decades of aid had failed to reduce poverty among the people of the developing countries, despite national economic growth, the lives of the poor were now in focus. In 1990 the UNDP replaced previous years thinking about measuring development by looking at GDP and per capita income, with a new measurement; The Human Development Index (HDI). The development of third world countries should now be measured according to life expectancy, adult literacy and the power to purchase commodities to meet basic needs (Haslam, et al., 2012). Development programmes redirected their focus from macroeconomic reforms to rebuilding the social sector; health, education, water and sanitation was now seen as essentials ingredients in tackling poverty. Economic growth was now perceived as a means rather than an end, in reaching the realisation that

"*Human development is a process of enlarging peoples' choices […] at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living*"
(UNDP, cited in Haslam et al., 2012)

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5.3 The Millennium Development Goals

The ideas shaping international development in the 1990s carried on into the new millennium, while they continued to develop. In September 2000, 193 UN member states came together to sign the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of eight specific targets set to be achieved by 2015 (Van Bilzen, 2015). The eight MDGs are:

1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2) Achieve universal primary education
3) Promote gender equality and empower women
4) Reduce child mortality
5) Improve maternal health
6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7) Ensure environmental sustainability
8) Global partnership for development

(United Nations, 2016)

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Most of the goals where not new to the development world, but had been part of different reports and agendas during the 1990s. But this time they were put together and formed an official development strategy, agreed to by almost a hundred nations worldwide (Van Bilzen, 2015). There has been some critique of the MDGs, especially from developing countries, who have stated that they did not participate enough in developing the goals, that they distorted the development agenda by only focusing on a few specific areas and in connection to that, that the MDGs overlook important issues such as climate change, migration, conflict and security (Ibid). Some criticism has been more harsh than others, as this example shows:

"The MDGs were technocratic, top down measures to ensure accountability to funders, with little attention paid to country specific needs, the structural causes of socioeconomic deprivation, or the voices of aid recipients, [they were] neoliberal devices to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of development programs in recipient countries"
(Gray, 2017).

Despite the critical claims, the MDGs has contributed to significant improvements in several areas of development, however, not all goals were fully reached. The number of people living in extreme poverty has declined by more than half from 1990 to 2015, with the most progress being made in the 2000s. The primary school enrolment rate has increased from 83% in 2000 to 91% in 2015 and more girls now receive primary education. Child mortality has dropped and maternal health has become better (United Nations, 2015).

The 2000s were characterised by a focus on poverty reduction, targeting poor people instead of national economic growth, with the so-called "pro-poor growth". In addition to this, significant increases occurred in the amount of development assistance going to the social sector and services, while less money went to economic infrastructure (Van Bilzen, 2015). With the 2nd High Level Forum on Harmonisation held in Paris in 2005, an attempt was made to change development cooperation processes, with a renewed focus on effectiveness of development work, recipient country ownership and harmonisation of donor country efforts (Ibid).

As the deadline for reaching the MDGs came closer, the international community sought to set new goals for development. On the Rio20+ Conference in 2012, the participating countries agreed to set up a workforce, which should formulate new goals which could replace the MDGs by 2015. This resulted in the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable

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Development Goals (SDG), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 (United Nations, 2016). The 17 SDGs included some of the same themes as the MDGs, such as poverty, hunger and education, but they also brought climate change and environment to the forefront of the development agenda. With goals such as "Affordable and clean energy", "Responsible consumption and production", "Protect and conserve life on land and in water" and "climate action", the path was set to focus on protecting the planet and our living environments for the next fifteen years (Ibid).

As this chapter has shown, international development has taken on many different forms during the past seven decades. From a focus on infrastructure and macroeconomic growth to a concern with improving the lives of the poor and vulnerable through sectors such as health and education. There have also been some significant changes in the geographical distribution of development assistance through the years. In 1961, a quarter of all international aid went to the middle east and north Africa, while 20% was sent to South Asia and only about 10% to Sub Saharan Africa. In 2008, this had changed quite a bit, as more than 40% was sent to the African countries, 40% to Asia and around 12% to the Americas (Kingsbury, et al., 2012). When the War on Terror began in the early 2000s this also impacted the distribution of aid. In the first eight years of the new millennium, 17% of all international aid went to just three countries; Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan (ibid).

These numbers clearly show, that international political agendas have not only influenced the way development work has been carried out and which sectors have been in focus, but also what countries have received the attention of the international agencies and donors. Throughout the years, aid flows, levels and distribution have been influenced by foreign policy, colonial history, trade- and geopolitical objectives of the wealthy western nations (Ibid).

6.0 Participatory Development, Critiques and Counter-Critiques

The term Participation or Participatory Development has dominated the development discourse during the last 25 years and is now an integral part of many development organisations' strategies, projects and methodology. The concept became especially popular during the 1990s and have since then been adopted by large international agencies such as the World Bank, however Participation is much older than that. Before moving on to a definition of Participatory Development and the many critiques and counter-critiques the

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concept has been subject to until today, I will present some of the historical examples of participation in development, from before the 1990s.

Going all the way back to British Colonial rule, participation was part of the official colonial policies about development of the colonies. Using the term "indirect rule", the British colonies created institutions based on local, traditional leaders and institutions, to oversee certain functions. Though the 1930s this technique was criticized for amplifying existing power inequities, giving power to the ones already powerful, and overlooking the vulnerable people, especially women and children (Cornwall, 2006). As we will see later on, this critique has followed participatory development to this day.

In the 1950s when decolonisation was underway, many colonial powers tried to prepare the colonies for independent rule, by giving the local population the administration techniques they regarded as important, in order to master self-governance. But despite the focus of handing over to the African peoples, the techniques and knowledge they gained, was what the colonial powers found to be right and modern. These first signs of an attempt to involve the recipients of development activities more directly in program activities continued for the next couple of decades.

In 1956, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) stressed the importance of "participation of the people themselves in efforts to improve their level of living" and throughout the 1970s, countless reports, studies and projects praised the possibilities of participatory development (Cornwall, 2006). This was also the time when Paulo Freie introduced his Participatory Action Research, and advocated for creating new learning environments for people, where they could express their needs and achieve development (Desai & Potter, 2014). During the 1980s Participation was reinvented, with a focus on cost-sharing and co-production of services in development projects, very suitable for the neo-liberalist views dominating the development discourse at the time (Cornwall, 2006). Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) emerged during this decade, as a toolkit of techniques and methods which could be used in participatory development programmes, to gather information, analyse it and plan and carry out development initiatives. PRA has moved on to become one of the most famous and widely used participatory techniques (Mikkelsen, 2005).

The concept became more and more popular during the 1990s, and was soon incorporated into development policies and strategies globally, and became part of the mainstream development agenda. At the same time, more and more of development work

was undertaken by NGOs, who were believed to be more cost-effective, more participatory and better at reaching the poor populations, than large international agencies (Cornwall, 2006). As this brief introduction shows, the concept of participation has been present in development discourse for many years, and there is nothing new or innovative about it. Despite this reoccurring focus on participation, the practices and actual programmes claiming to be participatory has changed over time, not least because of decades of harsh criticism from both academics and practitioners.

6.1 Defining Participatory Development

Despite its widespread use in the development world, there is no official or broadly accepted definition of Participation. Instead, the term has been interpreted in very different ways throughout the years, and by different organisations and donors. In its essence, Participation is about involving the people who are supposed to benefit from development work, in the projects intended to help them, however, the level of involvement, or Participation if you like, differs greatly. Roughly speaking, there are two ways of categorising the many different definitions of the concept. The first is to distinguish between Participation as a Means, also known as Instrumental Participation, and Participation as an end, also called Transformational Participation. The second is to view the many definitions as different stages of participation, on a continuum or scale (Mikkelsen, 2005). I will return to these two ways of categorising.

The way participation has been understood differs from a focus on contributing to project work, where participation is a

"*Voluntary Contribution by the people*" in development projects "*But the people are not expected to take part in shaping the programme or criticizing its contents*" (Economic Commission for Latin America in Parfitt, 2004).

To using participatory methods in all stages of development projects, with the aim of gathering information, here participation is:

"*The fostering of a dialogue between the local people and project or programme preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation staff in order to obtain information on the local context and on social impacts*" (Mikkelsen, 2005).

Towards a more inclusive form of participation, focusing both on the process and its outcomes:

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"*Community participation [is] an active process by which beneficiary or client groups influence the direction and execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish*" (Paul in Parfitt, 2004).

No matter the definition of the concept, it is generally accepted that development work will be improved, if the people intended to benefit from them are actively involved. Chambers writes about the effects of using Participatory methods;

"*Those who, through a PRA process express and share what they already know, also learn through that expression and sharing. Those who investigate and observe add to their knowledge. Those who analyse become yet more aware and reach new understanding. Those who plan and then implement what they have planned take command, and further learn through the experience of action*"
(Chambers, 1994).

Although Chambers refers to PRA in this paragraph, what he writes resonates with Participatory Development theories in general. Participation is about giving local people skills, knowledge and the ability to act as agents in developing their own lives. It is about empowerment; giving them the power to change their lives to the better (Desai & Potter, 2014). As the section below will show, the way participation is viewed can have a big influence on project results.

As mentioned earlier, some categorize the different definitions of participation into two categories; means or end. The Means/End definitions reflect an inherent ambiguity in the concept of Participation, according to Trevor Parfitt, who argues that it has very different implications and outcomes, whether the concept is seen as a means or as an end (Parfitt, 2004). Participation as a means is when implementing organisations and other practitioners uses participatory methods to include the beneficiaries in the project implementation, in order to achieve effective and efficient results. As such, participation is used as a tool, with the aim of reaching project objectives, but is not seen as an objective in itself. Such use of the approach usually means that power relations between beneficiaries or participating communities, and the agencies and organisations responsible for the projects, are left untouched and unchallenged. Project design, defining needs, challenges and priorities and coming up with intended outcomes is still done by the traditional authorities, the agencies and organisations. This type of Participation has been subject to much of the critique which has been raised about the concept. Some see this as not being "true" Participatory

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Development, as it fails to bring the effects of empowerment, knowledge and ability to act to the people involved (Parfitt, 2004).

Participation as an end it itself, or Transformational Participation is very different. Here

"*Participation is seen as a process of development in its own right, rather than as a tool for achieving certain goals*"
(Parfitt, 2004).

Participation is viewed as a goal of development, as the intention is to transform existing power relations and bring empowerment and liberation to the recipient communities. Through this process, people are given the tools and knowledge to take control over and influence their own lives and thereby be active participants in their own development (Ibid). Participation as a means usually involves giving the people a bigger voice in development initiatives, not just during implementation, but in defining their own needs and priorities, participating in monitoring and self-evaluating and sharing knowledge with each other (Ibid.).

In reality, the majority of development projects falls somewhere in between the two, and according to Parfitt, this should also be the goal; agencies must try to find a balance between seeing participation as a means and as an end.

The second way of describing definitions of Participatory Development is, as described above, to view them as different stages of participation on a scale. Here, the first definition offered above, where people are invited to participate in project activities, but have no influence over project design is at one end of the scale, with the lowest stages of participation. In projects where empowerment, community involvement and structural or democratic changes are viewed as intended outcomes, participation is at the other end of the scale, involving people in every stage of development, and aiming at changing their abilities to change their own lives.

6.2 A Very Contested Concept

In this section, I will shortly introduce some of the main critiques which have been raised about participatory development, especially since its reinvention in the 1990s. I will then elaborate further on them, as I use them in my analysis of the FFLG projects in the next chapter. The debate about the concept of participation has engaged both scholars and practitioners in the development world. In the academic world, scholars within the fields of different disciplines such as anthropology, international relations, international development,

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agriculture and many more have been involved in the debate. Many of these have conducted years of research in developing countries as part of their work on participatory development. Practitioners working with international agencies and NGOs have also joined the debate. As such, it is a broad range of experts from both the academic world and the practical application of development projects who have concerned themselves with this subject.

As previously explained, participatory development emerged as a critique of more mainstream development practices, based on the idea that these were Eurocentric and used a top-down approach, where locals had little say in developing the projects. Contrary to these, participation was supposed to give the power back to the local peoples, giving them greater control over their own lives and achieve meaningful social change within the communities (Desai & Potter, 2014). One of the most often repeated critiques of participatory development is that none of this is actually the case. These critics claim that participation is merely being used as a buzzword in development organisation, hiding the fact that all major decisions about project design, method, implementation and desired objectives are still decided at a higher level (Parfitt, 2004). In this type of tokenism, the rhetoric of participatory development is used as a kind of rubber stamp, to show the surroundings that an organisation is participatory, fitting in to the development discourse of today. But in reality the use of participatory development is little more than symbolic, as the organisations have done little to change their practices on the ground (Desai & Potter, 2014). In some cases, when local representatives are invited to be part of project design, these are middleclass people, handpicked to agree with what is already decided elsewhere (Ibid).

Related to this critic is the question of whether some of the methods used in participatory development actually brings about empowerment or social change to the participating communities, or if they simply claim to do so. One of the most famous participatory approaches is Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). It is a set of tools and techniques which can be used to gather information and data, analyse it and then plan and act based on this data (Mikkelsen, 2005). When using PRA, it is not just the researcher him/herself who is involved in gathering data prior to and during a project, but it involves several different stakeholders; all the different groups of people who are affected by the project. The techniques used can be semi-structured interviews, ranking and scoring, constructing and analysing maps, creating models and diagrams, setting up dramas and roleplays or conducting workshops and public hearings. Many of these techniques are not necessarily new, but have

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been adjusted to become more participatory (Ibid). PRA have been criticized for being too mechanistic and routinized, not leaving room for the participants to influence the process (Parfitt, 2004). An example of this could be if a group of local people are invited to rank different farming techniques based on how effective/useful they are. While this might appear to invite the locals to share their own knowledge and priorities, if the different techniques which should be ranked or the way they are described in the ranking have already been selected by project staff, the answers will not necessarily reflect the opinions of the people involved in the study. Instead, PRA techniques should leave room for adjustment and critique by the participating community, giving them the opportunity to give feedback to the organisation, based on criteria they have selected themselves (Ibid).

The two critical claims above are often used in connection with development project where participation is used as a means rather than an end. Here, the aim is to enhance the effectiveness of pre-determined projects by involving the locals in the implementation, but they are not invited to be part of deciding development proposals or objectives. There seems to be a general agreement that top-down planning without involvement of stakeholders is one of the main reason for failure of previous projects. And that involving them will ensure efficiency, sustainability and effectiveness (Desai & Potter, 2014). You could argue then, that in these instances of instrumental participation, the intention is not to "not bring empowerment to the people", but the use of participatory methods derives from a desire to ensure the efficient delivery of project objectives and the sustainability of these (Mikkelsen, 2005).

Participatory development is often focused on involving "the community" or groups of local people. But many have criticised this practice, raising concerns about who actually participates in these projects. These critics claim that the people chosen to participate is the community elites, the ones already holding a strong position of power, while the marginalised, the most poor and women are not included (Mikkelsen, 2005). The result of this will often be that, while the intention is to support the entire community, resources and benefits from the projects actually passes to the elite (Ibid).

Related to this issue is the risk of treating "the community" as a homogenous group, not taking into account the many differences within the groups, along the lines of gender, age, ethnicity, social standing or poverty (Parfitt, 2004). There is a risk that development organisations believe that the ones they meet and involve in project design and

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implementation represents the entire community, while in reality they only speak for a small fraction of it. When this happens, it is not just the power relations between donor agency or organisation and the local people that is reinforced, but also the power relations within the communities.

When you look at the critical claims about participatory development mentioned above, it is clear that, despite its praise and widespread use in the development world, it is not unproblematic to claim the usage of participatory methods. If participation is to be successful in bringing about social change and empowerment and giving people the ability to change their own lives, these critiques must be taken seriously. Parfitt offers a series of ideas as to how participation should be reconstructed, in order to successfully bring change to the receiving communities. According to him, development organisations should place less emphasis on measuring quantifiable outputs from projects, and focus more on process and capacity building. This should be done through a focus on training and using facilitators, to help the local people build their capacities to change their lives (Parfitt, 2004).

Next, true participation is not only about the receiving communities, but also about structural and systemic change within the organisations. The organisations must embody the principals of participation, such as mutual respect, tolerance, openness to differing views and the ability to learn from mistakes. Only if this is the case, will the development organisations be ready to engage in dialogue and receive critique from the participating communities (Ibid). Chambers elaborates on the importance of outsiders to change their behaviour and attitude towards local people, when using participatory methods such as PRA;

"*For local people confidently and capably to express their own knowledge, to conduct their own analysis, and to assert their own priorities, outsiders had to step off their pedestals, sit down, "hand over the stick," and listen and learn*"
(Chambers, 1994)

Parfitt also recommends the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR), which is methodology where debate and critique are an integral part of the process. Here, the participating communities are part of every step in the development process; they formulate their own strategies, initiate which activities they will do to improve their situation, they take part in analysing it and take action based on such an analysis. They then reflect on the process and take new action based in this. In PAR people are fully involved in the processes of changing their own lives (Ibid).

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As this chapter have shown, coming up with a clear and widely accepted definition of Participatory Development is not an easy task. Despite its widespread use within the world of international development, it seems there has been more focus on discussing the concepts strengths and weaknesses, than on agreeing on a definition which can be used in both theory and practice. In the analysis below, I have chosen a transformational understanding of participation as my starting point. Despite the debate that has characterised the subject of participation in the past 20 years, there seems to be a broad acceptance within the academic and development sectors alike, that true participation is a *process* which brings social change, empowerment, ownership and the ability and knowledge to actively change their own lives, to the poor and vulnerable people involved in development work (Cornwall, 2006) (Parfitt, 2004). This understanding of Participation is shared by both international agencies and smaller NGOs alike. IFAD and The World bank writes in a report on their collective efforts to use participatory development that;

"*Participation have empowered rural people to identify, plan, implement, and evaluate interventions, giving them a greater stake in development efforts*"

they go on to conclude that their projects have brought significant results when it comes to;

"*empowering local people and communities to be the prime drivers of development*"
(IFAD, 2004)

Another influential player in the development world, CARE International, writes about the importance of making Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Learning (MERL) processes participatory:

"*Participation is important meaningful because it is empowering and non-extractive due to the continuous involvement through all the PMERL steps and contributes to joint learning for action by local stakeholders*"
(CARE International, 2012).

As these examples show, there is an emphasis of involving local stakeholders in all parts of project planning, implementation and evaluation. They also show a focus on the principles and values of empowerment and giving locals people the abilities and knowledge to be active drivers of their own development. These are the same principles which is incorporated in the transformational definition of Participation as described above. It is important to mention, that there is no guaranteed checklist of how to conduct Participatory Development in a way that ensures that these will be the effects of the projects. Empowerment and

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community action are the desires effects, which development practitioners and stakeholders strive to achieve.

I will return to analysing the effects of the FFLG projects with regards to their ability to bring such changes to the communities, in chapter 8. Here I will also elaborate on the concept of empowerment, which is central to Participatory Development.

7.0 Analysis of the Participatory Nature of the FFLG Approach

When Organic Denmark developed the Farmer Family Learning Groups Approach, they did so because they identified several shortcomings in traditional extension services in Uganda, and saw that existing approaches, such as the Farmer Field Schools, did not properly meet the needs of the farmers. The approach was developed based on the farmers own challenges and needs, and adjusted along the way, whenever it was needed (Vaarst, et al., 2012). OD does not mention the concept of Participatory Development in their own project descriptions or on their website, however, reading through the project documents and the booklet about the FFLG approach, it is quite clear that Participatory development constitute the conceptual background for their projects. The name of the ECOSAF project itself hints the participatory concept "Empower Civil Society and Strengthen Food Security for Farmer Families", as the word empowerment is at the very essence of participation. In The Rwenzori Experience, the aim of the FFLG approach is described as helping the farmers to

"*Get together to develop their farms, improve their livelihoods and food security in their families, develop and learn together and build up social capital in their communities*" and continues to stress that; "*It is the participants who choose their approach, they take ownership of their own development*"

(Vaarst, et al., 2012).

It seems clear then, that OD describes their own development work as participatory, and seeks to obtain the same qualities as this approach; empowerment, community development and ownership. But as we have seen above, participatory development has been criticised for tokenism and not lacking real involvement of the people it claims to help. The question to be analysed is then; How does the FFLG projects deal with the pitfalls and critiques of participatory development?

In this chapter I will analyse the FFLG projects' participatory nature, look at whether they fall victim to the same critical claims as many other participatory projects or if they truly do embody the principles and values of participation. Based on the findings of this analysis, I will then analyse the results these projects have brought to the communities, seeking to

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answer whether the participatory nature of the projects, or lack thereof, can be seen in the changes they bring about.

7.1 Peoples' Involvement in the Project

In the section above outlining the different critiques of Participatory Development, one of the main points where, that even though development organisations claim to use participation, much of project design is still decided within the organisations, while the recipients are only involved very late in the process, if at all. When looking at the FFLG projects, we must ask; to how high a degree do the FFLG groups participate in every part of project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation? How much is externally decided and how much do they decide, of what their own needs, priorities and challenges are?

Going back to the beginning of the FFLG approach, the work of developing a new concept for farmer training and planning the FFLG projects, was done with the involvement of many different stakeholders. During an interview with Mette Vaarst, who was part of the team who developed the concept, she told me about the process. In 2008, OD carried out an appraisal together with SATNET and NOGAMU. The goal was to develop a concept for farmer learning, based on previous experiences with FFSs.

During a visit to Uganda, Mette and the rest of the team conducted workshops with local organisations who work with agricultural extension in western Uganda. Among the participants were potential future facilitators, who would be involved in the project later on. Together they discussed how the approach should be designed. The national organisation for organic agriculture in Uganda, NOGAMU and several other organisations working with farmers were involved in the process. They also conducted a series of group interviews with local farmers about training needs, where the participants formulated a series of recommendations for training in organic farming. The focus groups consisted of both men

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and women from all age groups (Organic Denmark, 2009). Later on, another workshop was held with representatives from the Agricultural Ministry and university researchers. Based on the knowledge gained through these workshops, OD, NOGAMU and SATNET formulated a project proposal and began the process of fundraising and preparing the projects.

From Organic Denmark's own documents, we can see that all project stakeholders were involved in the process of designing the FFLG approach and the first project which was carried out in western Uganda. Without having been present at the different workshops and group interviews, it is impossible to know exactly how they were carried out and assess how much influence the local farmers had, when it comes to developing the training concept. But we know that the people intended to benefit from the project were involved very early in the planning process. In addition to this, ODs way of working in the early stages, through whole-day workshops and group discussions and their decision to involve so many different stakeholders in the process, suggests a genuine interest in developing a concept based on the needs and priorities of the farmers themselves.

Throughout the first FFLG project which began in 2009, OD, NOGAMU and SATNET carried out a number of activities aimed at monitoring and evaluating the progress of the project. These activities are described in the Final Report, which was handed to the Projektrådgivningen at the end of the project.

The IOs organised follow-ups and exchange of experiences between facilitators and groups throughout the project period. Through these activities, they identified the challenges they were facing in implementing the project, which were passed on to the three partner organisations. In addition to this, SATNET carried out monitoring of the project, including visits to all involved FFLGs and facilitators. OD was involved throughout this process, as they received written reports and feedback and had discussions with NOGAMU and SATNET over email and phone throughout the process (Organic Denmark, 2010). Based on what they had learned during the project period, OD decided to change their initial plan concerning a final baseline study;

"*A final baseline study was planned to be carried out using the methodology 'Most significant change', rather than a follow-up on the four groups selected for the initial baseline study. This choice was made because we realised that the changes in the villages and groups were multi-faceted and more complex than measure yield on the fields and food habits in the family. We therefore chose to take a more participatory, interactive and*

comprehensive method"

(Organic Denmark, 2010).

The process described above shows an interest in including all levels of stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation of the projects, and also a willingness to adjust the planned activities to better suit the circumstances, whenever it seems necessary. This shows that OD did not only involve the beneficiaries in the process of both project planning, monitoring and evaluation, but also that they listened to their feedback and acted accordingly. It seems that OD have avoided the trap of only using participation at a rhetoric or symbolic level, as some organisations have been criticised for doing, as described in the previous chapter.

In section 7.4 about structural changes within project organisations, I will elaborate further on the subject of feedback and critique, and the willingness to change project design and implementation, based on the lessons learned from previous experiences.

7.2 Working in the Groups and the use of PRA Techniques

Given the fact that much of the critique about Participatory development is aimed at the use of PRA techniques, it makes sense to take a closer look at the use of these in the FFLG projects. However, on this subject, the amount and kind of data I have been able to collect for this thesis makes it difficult to conduct a thorough analysis. Ideally, participant observation of the FFLGs conducting monitoring and evaluations and access to the manuals on this would have given a clear understanding of how these processes are carried out in the projects. One of the main critiques about the use of PRA is that it is often done in a "checklist" and inflexible manner, which might not capture the actual priorities of the participants, even though this is the original intention (Haslam, et al., 2012). With a longer fieldwork, I would have had the chance to observe whether this is also the case in the FFLG projects. Evaluation and monitoring reports are internal documents between OD and the IOs, and I have not been able to gain access to most of them. This makes it difficult to asses how the IOs use PRA in their daily work.

I have some reports and teaching materials mentioning the use of different PRA techniques, which can provide a clue to the way they are used in the projects. In addition to this, my interviews with facilitators and organisational staff allows me to get an idea of their attitude towards PRA and how it should be used. From the data I do have available about the approach, I will attempt to look at the issue of PRA, and determine where additional research could be useful to answer some of the questions that arise. These could be questions

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such as; Do the PRA techniques used leave room for adjustment and consider local context? Are the facilitators properly trained to understand the participatory principles underlying these techniques or have they become too much of a tyranny toolkit? Are they actually participatory?

PRA covers a wide range of tools which can be used both in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a project. The underlying idea is that the people participating in the project are encouraged to share *their* knowledge, ideas and needs, and thereby influence the project as much as possible. Chambers describes PRA as a;

"*Family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act*"

He then goes on to stress some important principles of PRA which are;

"*The behaviour of outsiders: facilitating analysis by local people; practicing critical self-awareness and responsibility; and sharing*"
(Chambers, 1994)

These are closely related to, what Chambers calls the Three Basic Components of PRA; Methods, Behaviour and Attitude, and Sharing. Methods refer to the set of methods used, which are supposed to facilitate analysis by local people. Previously, such analysis was typically done by outsiders, but with the PRA methods, the local people becomes their own analysts, analysing their own lives. Some of these methods include mapping, matrix scoring, trend and change analysis and generating figures and models.

Behaviour and attitude refers to the fact that doing proper PRA requires outsiders to change the way they think and behave in such situations. The outsider, perhaps a staff member of the implementing organisation, must step back and allow the local people to take charge of the process, not interfering or correcting them. It is important that the outsider does not interrupt, try to impose their own ideas or criticise the locals (Chambers, 1994). This is one of the reasons why Participatory Development prefers the use of facilitators, not teachers. I will return to the role of the facilitator later, in section 7.4.

The last principle, Sharing, has two dimensions; sharing knowledge and sharing experience. It is about recognising the importance of local knowledge and encouraging the participants to use and spread this knowledge between them. Sharing should take place both between locals people, between them and the outsider and between outsiders. The principle

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of sharing is closely related to issues of free access to information and an opposition against some people "owning" ideas or methods, but instead making them accessible to everyone (Ibid).
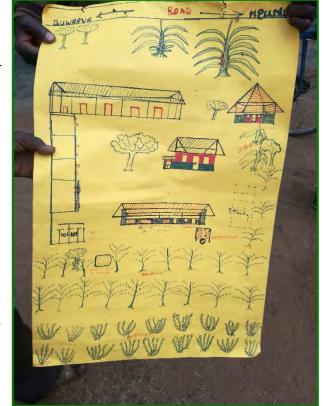
Before moving on to analysing the use of PRA in the FFLG projects, it is important to clarify the link between Participatory Development and PRA, as this may be confusing. PRA is a part of Participatory Development, a very important and widespread part. While Participatory development refers to the entire concept and the values behind this type of development work, PRA refers to a set of techniques and tools which can be used in practice together with local people, as a way of carrying out these participatory projects. As such, the principles described above are also part of the concept of Participatory Development (Haslam, et al., 2012).

The facilitator guide written by OD, NOGAMU and SATNET describes a number of tools which the facilitators can use, together with the groups. These tools are intended to help the

members analyse their situation, identify problems and needs, come up with possible solutions and then act accordingly. One of the tools described in the manual is making a farm plan. The farm plan is a drawing of the farm, which includes all the important element which work together to constitute the entire farm system. There are several advantages of these plans;

"*By drawing a farm plan, the overview over the farm gives a good platform for identifying the needs and the potentials of the farm, and to use it to discuss in the family*"
(Vaarst, et al., 2011).

The farm plan is made based on what the authors call an AESA analysis, which is a way to analyse every element of the farm system and how it works. The AESA provides a checklist of thing which can be included in a farm plan, but the authors stresses that this checklist is only a guide, and should be adjusted to each context, so that the farm plan includes the things each member views as important (Ibid).

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During my trip to Uganda, several of the FFLG members I met showed me their own farm plans. They explained to me what the plan showed, and that they had included their visions for the future, so that potential henhouses or storage facilities were also drawn on there. They explained to me, that the farm plan gave them a better overview of the farm and all the different crops they grew, and made it easier for them to manage their work.

The use of farm plans is a good example of how PRA techniques can help the local people to gain analytical skills to assess their own life and its opportunities. When a farm plan includes all elements of the farm, the farmers can analyse how these elements work together in a system and identify areas of concern. Without the opportunity to observe the FFLG members use the farm plan in their daily work, it is difficult to know if it works as intended. However the way they told me about the plan shows that they have understood the purpose of it. What is important to notice is the fact that the facilitator guide stresses the importance of being flexible and adjust to circumstances, when using the tool (Vaarst, et al., 2011). This shows an understanding of the fact that each tool in the PRA toolkit must be used with the specific context in mind, open to adjustment to the priorities of the locals.

When I talked to one of the programme managers from an IO, he told me about the daily work in the groups and how the facilitators teach them new things;

"They use different participatory methods like, brainstorming, buzz groups, café methods, plenary discussions. Where each day during training sessions there is a host team which takes charge of the training of the whole day, the host team works as moderators/facilitators of the day. These methods are indeed participatory and involving as the words suggest. They make learners go with the skills. It is hands on"

This statement clearly shows that the facilitators makes an effort to use participatory techniques when they work with the groups. And also that they understand what it means to be participatory; it is involving. We do not know, off course, how wide-spread this is among facilitators, but it shows that the IOs are concerned with the participatory nature of the training.

When it comes to monitoring and evaluation of the projects, it is very difficult to assess how this is done, without having observed it in the field. However, the project proposals from the ECOSAF project gives us a clue as to the organisations intentions on the subject. The proposal describes the different project activities and monitoring and evaluation of the project is mentioned throughout. It says that "Participatory monitoring and evaluation"

should be conducted by the local IOs "of and *with* the FFLGs" (my emphasis) (Organic Denmark, 2015). It is also emphasised that training material and additional training of the facilitators is needed, when it comes to conducting participatory monitoring and evaluation (Ibid). In the proposal, it says that previous projects have shown there is a need to strengthen these skills among the FFLGs and facilitators, and they stress that;

"*As part of the capacity building of facilitators and within FFLGs, an effort for further development of participatory monitoring and evaluation will be carried through, because it enables the FFLGs and facilitators to follow their goals and set new targets*"
(Organic Denmark, 2015)

This shows us that involving the FFLGs in the monitoring and evaluation processes is a priority to OD, and that they are concerned with improving it. However, as mentioned earlier, there has been instances in other projects where organisations simply use PRA as a rhetoric, to show the surrounding world that they are participatory. Because of this, we must be careful not to conclude that monitoring and evaluation is actually done in a participatory manner, just because the proposal says so. What we can say is that Participation and the involvement of the groups is mentioned several times, and seems to be a concern within project implementation.

In the same proposal, we find examples of less participatory evaluation processes. Midterm reflexion meetings and final evaluations are done at an organisational level, with representatives of all IOs, and therefor does not include the members of the FFLGs (Ibid). However, we do not know whether these meetings are conducted based on evaluations done within the groups, which then report to the IOs about their findings.

When talking about monitoring and evaluation of development projects, it is important to realise that these projects are carried out in a context of development work where the ability to shows clear, measurable indicators for each project activity, has been a demand from donors and larger organisations for decades. Aside from showing what the project has achieved in terms of measurable improvements, they also help keep track of the implementation of project activities and shows areas that needs to be improved. For this reason, many organisations must balance the need for affordable and efficient monitoring and evaluation, with the wish to involve all participating stakeholders in the process (Parfitt, 2004).

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Implementing a participatory project, is not just about using PRA tools when it comes to monitoring and evaluation. The way the daily work and training of the participating families is carried out, can be very participatory or not at all. In this section I will have a closer look at the daily work within the FFLGs, and analyse the participatory nature of it.

Most of the work done within the groups evolves around the following activities; going on rotational visits, training, working together in the fields, conducting meetings and Savings and Credit schemes. My data shows that especially rotational visits have had a great impact on the groups and the way they interact. During a rotational visit, the entire group visits a host farmer. The host shows them around his farm and choses some challenges which he would like the group to discuss and offer him advice on (Vaarst, et al., 2011). During such a visit, the entire group works on a task, decided by the host family. This could be constructing an animal shelter, preparing a new field for sowing or building fences. These visits are intended to build trust and togetherness among the group members, and also build up teamwork (Ibid). In the very first FFLG project, this method showed potential;

"*The common effort involving 20-30 group members to improve something on one farm can help the farmer move very far in just one day. This is very encouraging and stimulating for everybody*"
(Vaarst, et al., 2011).

The authors go on to tell about the importance of sharing knowledge among the members;

"*Knowledge and experience must be shared openly. The group members must acknowledge that the knowledge among the group members is valuable for everybody, and that all aspects of knowledge can benefit others. Problems and challenges are also shared – and the group members will experience that problems become smaller and benefits become bigger when shared*"
(Vaarst, et al., 2011)

My own data tells the same thing. Several of the groups I met with mentioned that they had benefitted greatly from the rotational visits. Both the host farmer and the visiting group members can gain something from the visits, as these two examples show;

"*We do the work collectively, we share the work in the group, and then you can see the changes. We went to Kiwesi and constructed a goat shelter there, we worked together and shared the labour, we worked as a group*"

In this first example, the family in Kiwesi got a finished goat shelter after just one days work with the group, something which might have taken many days to construct if the family was working on their own.

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"*We conduct exchange visits, where we go and learn from a farmer who has excelled in farming, and transfer that knowledge to our homes*"

Here, the host farmer is particularly skilled when it comes to organic farming, and he or she shares his best practices with the rest of the group, who can then go home and implement them on their own farms.

This way of training each other through the sharing of knowledge and labour is perhaps as participatory as can be. The external facilitator does not take part in these visits, they are planned and carried out by the groups themselves. The members decide what they want to work on, what issues should be discussed during a visit and how to proceed to the next host family. This means that everything is done according to their own priorities and needs, with no one from the outside coming in and telling them what to do. According to the FFLGs I met, working together in the group has changed their relationship;

"*the FFLG approach has built a spirit of togetherness in the community, through rotational visits among the FFLGs*"

When a group identifies an area where they lack some knowledge or skills within the group, they request training from the external facilitator on the subject. Because training is always done on request, they avoid the problems that may arise when following a pre-determined curriculum; that certain issues are irrelevant to the groups, that the teachings are not applicable to their local context or that members find it difficult to transfer what they learn to their own farms. The last has been found to be an issue when trainers use demonstration plots instead of focusing on each farmers' own farm, like they do in the FFLG approach (Vaarst, et al., 2012).

A participatory training method such as the rotational visits is particularly suited for organic agriculture, because it is both labour and knowledge intensive. Applying mulch, working with manure and managing both different crops and animals requires a lot more labour than simply using chemical pesticides on your fields (Ibid). Organic farming also requires a lot of knowledge about different farming techniques, managing the farm as an integrated system and battling pests and diseases with natural remedies. Because of this, the act of sharing all the knowledge which is already existing among the group members, and working together on each farm makes great sense when working with organic agriculture. This was observed by the team who developed the FFLG approach, and they wanted to build an approach which could overcome these challenges (Vaarst, et al., 2012).

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The groups I visited told me that they experienced a big difference from before they joined the groups;

"When you work as an individual, you might have some other personal problems, and you get poor yield. But when you are working in a group, if you say today we are going to weed, you will weed it at once. Other than saying "tomorrow I will weed" if you are alone, the next day you might have other problems and you get poor yields. But as a group you get more and you earn more"

7.3 Reinforcing Local Power Relations

Who participates in the projects and the FFLG groups? Who is left out? Who benefits from the projects? Who is being heard at meetings and have influence on decisions? These are some of the questions which must be answered if we want to look into the question of power in development projects. During more than 50 years, development work has been criticised for taking away power from the indigenous populations and reinforcing local power relations. This critique has been made based on the top-down nature of many development projects during the decades, and because development work in many instances was done based on western ideological values (Gray, 2017). Participatory development is supposed to break with this tradition, giving the power back to the people, by "handing over the stick of authority and control to local communities" (Haslam, et al., 2012). But it seems this has not always been the case, despite the noble intention.

On my first day of fieldwork, my guide and I drove out to meet one of the FFLGs working in the area around Iganga. The first group we visited waited for us as we drove in to the courtyard in between three small buildings with clay on the walls and thatched roofs. In the shadow under a large tree, the group members sat on weaved mats on the ground. There were about 8 members present, both men and women, but the group had 20 other members, who was unable to join us that day, as they were busy working in the fields. The woman who owned the farm where we were meeting was called Jane, she was a small, elderly woman with a big smile, and she showed us around her farm with great enthusiasm. Walking around Janes banana plantation and kitchen garden, both her and the other members told me about their farming; the different crops and the agro-ecological techniques they used. Jane told be about the progresses she had made since she joined the FFLG;

"Now I get a better harvest than before, and I sell it and earn money. I have bought a new piece of land, 3 acres, next to this field. I am going to grow bananas and cocoa and mangoes there"

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Walking around the farm, it became clear to me that Jane was a model member of the group, someone whom the others looked to for advice and guidance, because of her vast knowledge about farming. During my visit at Janes house, I did a group interview with the members. Both men and women took part in the discussion and offered their views and opinions. When one person spoke, the others sat in silence. The next person to speak often expressed that they had similar experiences as the previous member.

During my two week stay in Iganga, it became clear to me that this first meeting with the farmers was very describing of all the groups I met. Apart from a single group who only had female members, all groups consisted of both men and women, old and young. During our meetings, there was no one group of members who dominated the discussions; everyone contributed, told me their view of things and shared their experiences. It seems quite clear that the FFLGs do not fall into the trap of only including the elite or overlooking women and children. In these groups, it is encouraged that the entire family, including women and children, are involved with the work on the farm and take part in group activities, which is also what I experienced. However, it is impossible to know if this also shows a shift in the underlying power structures within the communities.

In order to gain a thorough understanding of the internal power relations within communities and families, one would have to spend many months working and living alongside the members of the groups. If I had gotten the chance to spend more time with the families, observing how they work together on daily tasks and how they communicate in the privacy of their own home, I might have gained a better understanding of this. My short fieldwork can show us who is involved in the projects and thereby benefits from the training and knowledge they bring, but it cannot tell us about the deeper, more hidden, structures within these communities.

The importance of including women in development work is widely discussed within the sector. In a research working paper on the productivity gap between genders in agricultural

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production, Ali et. Al. writes that even though women make up the majority of the labour force within the agricultural sector in Uganda, they usually cultivate plots that are 20-30% smaller than men's. At the same time, they often have less access to inputs such as fertilizer, training and extension services. This poses a problem to both national GDP growth and income equality between the sexes (Ali, et al., 2015). Trying to overcome unequal power relations within development then, is very much about making sure that women benefit from projects offering training and giving them the knowledge they need to increase production.

Working with the FFLG groups have brought positive changes within the families, as a female member of one group told me;

"The FFLG approach have done great work, it has reduced the dependence on the husband, because the woman expected a lot from the husband, to perform all the home activities, like buying food. But with the Farmer Family Learning Groups, we can now make vegetable gardens, and we don't have to wait for the husband to buy something. With those vegetables, we can sell it and get money, and maybe buy something for our children. So you find that we are less dependent on the husbands"

Another member told me something similar;

"With this approach, it has been transparent in the family, and there has been a reduce in family conflict. Because when the wife go in the group, the husband also has to come there. Domestic violence has been reduced. Because the members have been synthesized and we are aware of the approach"

Better harmony and collaboration between husband and wife was mentioned several times during my fieldwork, as one of the many advantages of the approach. It was also clear that many of the women now shared a bigger responsibility when it comes to the family farm. Previously, the men made most of the decisions when it came to farming. They decided if they wanted to sell an animal and what to spend the money on and they had the knowledge needed to tend to the animals and crops. In the final report for the first appraisal project carried out by OD, one of the challenges observed was; Social and cultural tendencies of male dominans (Organic Denmark, NOGAMU, SATNET, unknown). In one of the project evaluation reports, there is also a paragraph on gender issues, which says that;

"Men often have the main economic and formal decision making power in the family. For instance the men do the marketing of the farm produce"
(Invagri Ltd, 2015).

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It is impossible to know exactly how the workload and the decision-making has been distributed between husband and wife before the FFLG project began, as I do not have access to detailed ethnographic data from that time. But there seems to have been a change since the FFLGs were introduced. The families told me that now, they discuss their farming activities together in the home. They decide which crops they want to focus on and they make plans of farming expenses and expected incomes, and for how they want to spend the money they earn. Many of the female members have gained knowledge and skills needed to contribute to the everyday work on the farm; they have learned how to make vegetable gardens where they grow things like onions, herbs and cabbage and they are better able to tend to the animals.

I have not been able to find any academic literature about the social structures and power in eastern Ugandan households. Because Uganda I so ethnically and culturally diverse, any account of societal structures, culture or power relations from Uganda cannot be used in this particular case. There might be great cultural differences between different geographical areas and ethnic groups, which is why it is unwise to assume that what is true in one part of Uganda is also true in the area where my research was conducted.

Stressing the importance of whole family involvement has clearly benefitted the communities involved with the FFLG projects, and it seems clear that both men and women have benefitted from being part of the projects. The fact that there seems to be a more equal distribution of the responsibilities and workload suggest there has been a change in the relations between husband and wife.

It is difficult to assess whether this is also the case when you look at poverty levels within the communities. I did not talk to the members about how the groups were comprised when it came to socio-economics. But looking at the homes of the farmers I visited, I saw great differences between different members. While some lived in tiny huts, had very small pieces of land and owned a few chickens, others had both cows, goats, chickens and bees, and were farming much larger pieces of land. Based on this, and the fact that group membership is open to all and voluntary, I reach the conclusion that both the more prominent community members and the poorest are members of the groups, and therefor benefit from the results of the projects.

When looking at power relations in development, it is not just a question of analysing the communities and families involved. It is equally important to look at the relationship between the development organisation in charge of the project and the different stakeholders

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involved. The aim is to avoid top-down control, where an external organisation, often situated in another country, runs the entire project (Desai & Potter, 2014). In the FFLG projects, OD's role in project design, implementation etc. and their relationship with the IOs is described in their project proposals for one of the projects;

"*SATNET has strongly taken the lead role of implementing the project together with its MOs at grass root levels while OD takes the role of a partner who advice project design, monitoring and re-planning*" (Organic Denmark, 2014).

As the lead organisation, OD is involved throughout the project period, but they do not have the responsibility of implementing the project on the ground. Instead, this job falls to the MOs of SATNET and NOGAMU. These are local NGOs and businesses who works closely with the farmer families on a daily basis. They have knowledge of the local context and conditions. But how much do the IOs and MOs have to say, when it comes to influencing project design?

One way of ensuring that projects becomes truly participatory, is to ensure that the organisations and NGOs involved with implementing the projects also adopt participatory practices. Changes should take place not just in the way development projects are implemented on the ground, but within the organisations; it requires a structural/systemic change within organisations, where personnel must adopt participatory behaviour such as tolerance, mutual respect, openness to differing views, adaptability and the ability to learn from mistakes (Parfitt, 2004). This does not only apply when talking about the staff of the organisations, it must be a part of the organisation structure and the work atmosphere. When you read through the project proposals from OD, it becomes clear that these things are part of the way they work. One traces the development of the collaboration between OD, SATNET and the MOs:

"*The MOs play a very key role as they are more close to the farming community. They were – and they felt – by-passed in the project. This led to a long process – 2 years – of common reflection, action, development, structuring and re-distribution of roles and responsibilities within the project between SATNET, NOGAMU and OD. This process was concluded during 2013, where it became clear and where everybody involved in the process confirmed that the FFLGs were part of the MOs, and therefore monitoring and support of the FFLGs were responsibilities of the respective MOs, and not of SATNET*"
(Organic Denmark, 2014)

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The process described in this paragraph shows that OD is concerned with improving practices that does not work well, and with involving the stakeholders in the process of doing so. The relationship between OD and the IOs is described time and again as a partnership, emphasising the importance of working together, on equal terms, in achieving project objectives. Instead of taking control and making decisions by themselves, OD shares the power of decision-making and implementation with their partners, thereby evening out what could have been an unequal power relation.

7.4 Change within Organisations

As the previous paragraph shows, there is a willingness to involve and listen to different stakeholders within OD. This suggests that the organisation is not only encouraging participatory methods on the ground, within the groups, but also seeks to embrace the approach within their own organisation. In this section I will look further into this theme of organisational changes and investigate whether the use of the FFLG approach have spread to the different IOs and partners involved in the projects.

Parfitt sums up the organisational changes needed, if participatory development is going to work in practice; changes should take place within the organisations; this requires a structural/systemic where personnel must adopt participatory behaviour such as tolerance, mutual respect, openness to differing views, adaptability and the ability to learn from mistakes. The organisations must work to create more opportunities for interchange and debate; practitioners should have opportunities to share experiences, debate, interact around the dilemmas of practice, and the less experienced should have the opportunity to gain advice from more experienced and solve problems together with them (Parfitt, 2004).

During my internship I talked to staff-members from the IOs who are working with the FFLG approach and implementing the projects on a daily basis. Many of them told me that their organisation was now using the approach as their main way of doing agricultural extension, because it has proved to be very effective and brought great results. It has also eased the workload for the staff, because much training is now done within the groups, where members teach each other. One of the external facilitators, told me about how they had integrated the approach in his organisation;

"It has been a process, like sitting down with the management, the directors of the organisation, the coordinators of the different projects, and synthesising. Because I have been doing this every time we have been

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having a staff meeting, and I was able to tell them the different benefits that we get from the approach. And it has been a process of doing this so they have seen the results, they have seen how it works and they have gone to the fields and they saw the farmers themselves and how they appreciate it"

In this organisation then, there has been room for discussion about the approach and an opportunity for people who work with it on the ground to share their experiences with people further up in the organisation. This is the kind of openness and opportunities for interchange that Parfitt talks about.

Another IO staff members told me that they hold regular meetings between the organisations, which gives them the opportunity to consult with each other and share ideas. In all the interviews I did with the different IOs during my internship, I asked how they had implemented the FFLG approach in their organisations. As mentioned above, the majority said that this was now their main approach when working with farmers, but they did not elaborate on how they had changed their own organisations accordingly. I did not ask about organisational changes, which might explain why this is, but when asked how the approach had affected their work within the organisations, they explained that it had made their work a lot easier and more effective and cost-efficient. They did not talk about any changes such as openness to different views within the organisations, or more discussion or sharing. This does not rule out that such changes might have occurred, but it suggests that it has not been the main priority for the IOs.

In the projects description for the ECOSAF2 project, OD writes that one of the project objectives, is to strengthen the capacity of the local organisations. The project activities includes regular exchange meetings and reflection meetings between the different IOs, with the participation of internal and external facilitators. These meeting will provide platforms for exchanging knowledge and information about the implementation of the approach. In addition to this, they will also strengthen the capacity of external facilitators, when it comes to reporting to IO officers and boards. There will also be strategy meetings attended by both IO boards and external facilitators.

The project proposal does not elaborate on how these meetings will be conducted. But these activities show us that there is going to be an exchange of knowledge and discussion of the approach which spans the different levels of each organisation, from board members to facilitators. This is a good sign, when it comes to the participatory environment in the

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organisations, because it encourages exchanging different views and experiences and reflection on the work, throughout the project implementation.

The facilitators have developed networks, which enables them to share their experiences with each other. One of them told me;

"*Okay, now we have a network and internal facilitators, so in this network they sit monthly to deliberate on the different issues they are going to work up on and its like a planning and also review platform. So they review their past activities, but also plan ahead for the subsequent month*"

I am unable to give a more thorough analysis of the organisational changes than the one above. The different opportunities for knowledge sharing and discussion I have described is a good sign, but they only show us the activities that are going on, they do not tell us anything about the underlying values such as respect and openness, which Parfitt also talks about.

One very important element of the participatory approach to development, is changing the way training and teaching is done. It is an integral part of Participatory development, to talk about *facilitation* rather than traditional teaching methods. This was already evident in the section above about PRA, but here I want to look further at the role of the facilitator, and whether the facilitators in the FFLG projects have adopted the values of Participatory development and the FFLG approach in their work.

The ideas within Participatory Development about training and changing traditional education goes back to the work of Paulo Freie in the 1960s (Desai & Potter, 2014). In his book "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed" Freire connects learning to social change, saying that education is a crucial element in the process of changing existing conditions of oppression and creating a transformation to a more free and democratic society. Freire believed that the learner should have the role of a problem poser, an active and informed participant becoming aware of the world in which he or she lives. The teacher should become a facilitator and the traditional class a cultural circle. According to him, a dialogical relationship between teacher and student is important, fostering constant interaction between them in a process of critical analysis, problem posing and innovative, creative thinking (Schugurenski, 1998).

Other scholars within the field of Participation have been inspired by Paulo Freire's thinking and written about the role of the facilitator. Robert Chambers explains;

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"The Essence of PRA is change and reversals – of role, behaviour, relationship and learning. Outsiders do not dominate and lecture; they facilitate, sit down, listen and learn. Outsiders do not transfer technology; they share methods which local people can use for their own appraisal, analysis, planning, action, monitoring and evaluation. Outsiders do not impose their reality; they encourage and enable local people to express their own" (Chambers in Desai & Potter, 2014)

When you look at some of the statements I got from my informants who work as external facilitators, the similarities between these and Chambers explanation above are strikingly similar;

"It is about a special way of doing it. We sit down with the farmers group, and try to brainstorm, we try to do roleplay, to bring out the issues that are pertinent in their community. So you find that I myself do not sit down and start teaching them. But its from their communities that they realize "oh, we have this issue, and we have this need, so how do we go about it" and you find that they identify their own needs, they even have solutions to these needs. I just facilitate the process of doing this, I don't teach them, but I just facilitate so that they come up with their own issues that are pertinent in their communities"

Here, my informants explains how the members, during their meetings and with the help of the facilitator, are able to analyse their own situation, identify problems and come up with solutions to these. And as the results from the projects show, they are then able to take action to solve these problems. Chambers states that outsiders do not share technology, but methods. The FFLG projects do not hand out any agricultural inputs to the farmer groups, such as tools, processing machines or seeds. Instead, they share methods such as farm planning described above.

Another informant told me about the difference between being a facilitator and a teacher;

"The external facilitators, they facilitate the groups. We don't directly teach these people, but we let the people identify for themselves. Because we find that they have a lot of knowledge and information about certain things, there are around two people or three who have the information, who knows something better. So we identify the three people, we let those people train the others in what they know, in terms of organic agriculture, the good methods, like soil fertility and management. They know how to manage their soil, so they teach themselves"

The facilitators explained to me that their job is to facilitate this process of sharing and farmer-to-farmer training, making sure that it takes place and that they are able to identify the good practices that they can use. If the group finds that there are subjects where they do

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not have the knowledge required within the group, that is where the facilitator comes in, and offers them support and training.

When looking through my data from both my internship and my trip to Uganda, the general impression is that these facilitators have understood the role of the facilitators, and that they understand what it means to train the groups as one. All facilitators receive training on different workshops, where they learn about the FFLG approach and the different methods they can use. Through regular refresher courses, they are able to gain new knowledge and develop their skills as facilitators (Organic Denmark, 2015). But my data shows that, it is not just from this training that the facilitators learns about the benefits of this way of conducting training. Through their work with the farmers, they see the methods working in real life, and they develop an understanding of the approach. One informant told me about how working with the groups have shown him how much knowledge already exists between the farmers, and the importance of bringing it forward, when I asked about what keeps the facilitators motivated in their work;

"*One thing that they also find interesting is the knowledge, the facilitators gets knowledge from the farmers. We talked about the importance of treating diseases affecting crops, you find that the farmer who has been treating crop diseases and has a lot of knowledge and experience in treating that disease, he knows the herbs he uses to treat the disease, he has that knowledge. So if he shares with the rest of the members, then other members learn from him and the external facilitators also learns from him. Also it has happened to me, I have also learned a lot from these farmers*"

7.5 Preliminary Conclusion; Participation as a Means or and End?

In the analysis above, we get a clearer understanding of the methods used in the FFLG projects, who is involved in them and how the projects work to improve the lives of the stakeholders. Based on this analysis, we can then answer the question of whether these projects fall into the trap of claiming to be participatory, without acting according to this, whether they use participation as a means or if they are participatory in its transformational sense, where participation is seen as an end.

We have seen that all the different stakeholders really are involved, in all stages of project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In some instances to a lesser extent than might be desired from a standpoint at the far end of a participatory spectrum, for example when the final evaluations of the project objectives are done by organisations and external facilitators, not by FFLG members themselves. Despite of this, these members seem to have

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a significant voice and influence on the projects. The FFLG facilitators work in accordance with the principles of participation, when they step back and let the members lead the way, in training, knowledge sharing and decision-making. They use PRA techniques in their daily work with the groups, and embrace the FFLG approach in the way they work with the groups.

Looking at *who* is involved in the FFLGs, and whether the projects can be said to reinforce power-relations within the communities, by excluding the vulnerable from participating and benefitting, the answer is less clear. What we can see is, that all members of the communities are encouraged to participate, men, women, old and young alike. We also have several signs that the projects have improved the relationships between husband and wife, and resulted in the women having a greater influence on household decisions. However, these are only clues on the surface of a much more complex social life, and without a long-term fieldwork, we cannot determine whether underlying power structures have really been altered during the projects.

The organisations who work with the FFLG approach every day have chosen to adopt the approach as their main method of conducting farmer training and extension services. They also encourage knowledge sharing and discussion among facilitators and within their own organisations. Whether this have led to a deeper structural change within the organisations is difficult to determine, but we can see that they embrace the participatory principles of giving a voice to the receiving communities.

8.0 Analysis of Project Results; Do they bring Empowerment?

One of the most central terms within the concept of participation is Empowerment. Originating in a critique of the top-down, western-centric and sometimes even oppressive development practices of the past, Participatory development is essentially about giving power back to the people of the "global south"; the vulnerable and poor. Participatory development is intended to bring empowerment to the people involved in development projects by giving them the abilities to actively take part in bettering their own lives.

In the section above, we have analysed the participatory nature of the FFLG projects and seen how they strive to give the members of the groups these abilities. This brings us to a very important question; what then, does empowerment entail, and when looking at the results brought about by the FFLG projects, is empowerment among them? In this section I will attempt to answer this question by looking at the changes that have occurred within

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the communities where these projects take place. Here, the group interviews I conducted during my trip to Uganda becomes central, as they give the FFLG members a voice and an opportunity to talk about the improvements they have experienced in their lives.

The most obvious results the FFLG projects have brought evolves around improved food security. Both evaluation reports and the information I have gathered from organisations and group members mention significant improvements in household food security. These improvements covers a range of changes; the farmers harvest bigger yields from the same amount of cultivated land, they grow a bigger

variety of crops and they have fewer months of food shortage per years. In addition to this, there is an improvement in knowledge about agricultural techniques, post-harvest handling and record keeping within the groups. As one farmer told me;

"Before, I could hardly harvest good yields from my banana plantation, but with the training and knowledge on mulching, soil and water conservation practices, there has been an increase in yields. And even right now as I talk, there are bananas in my fields, and even though we are experiencing droughts, my fields have not been affected so much, because of the mulching practices I have put in place"

All of these improvements can be considered within in the category of mainstream development objectives, which are measurable by looking at specific indicators such as calorie intake pr. Person pr. Day or amount of maize grown per hectare.

The results which are of particular interest here though, are the ones which shows changes in peoples attitude, behaviour and capacity to act, to change their lives to the better. These are more difficult to measure with normal evaluation tools or surveys, but become evident when using qualitative methods.

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Before moving on to analyse these results, a few words on empowerment is needed. As noted earlier, participation is concerned with "handing over the stick", giving people the capacity to identify, analyse and solve challenges in their lives and be active agents in their own development (Haslam, et al., 2012) , (Desai & Potter, 2014). All of these things essentially boils down to the word Empowerment.

Much like Participation, empowerment is widely used, but not often defined within the development world. As the word itself entails, it has to do with power. But power in this context should not be understood as "power over" as is often the case. In a "zero-zum" understanding where power is understood as "power over" someone or something, it is understood that an increase in power for someone, equals a decrease in someone else's power. The Power referred to in empowerment should be understood more in the lines of "power to" and does not diminish someone else's power, if gained (Rowlands, 1996). Empowerment then refers to a process of giving people who has not traditionally been in a position of power, the capacities to change this. Here, a position of power does not refer to a high ranking job or political leadership, but a position from which one *has control over and the ability to influence ones own life* (Ibid).

Based on this understanding of the underlying element of power, we can sum up the meaning of empowerment with the following quotes;

Empowerment is

"*a process […] that involves moving from insight to action*"
(Rowlands, 1996)

"*Build on the notion that development is about the enhancement of the potential of people to emancipate themselves […] the intention is to give them greater control over their own lives*"
(Kingsbury, et al., 2012)

"*a process, which enables local people to make their own analysis, to take command, to gain in confidence, and make their own decisions*"
(Mikkelsen, 2005)

The ability to identify advocacy issues and act on these is one way in which people can take action to change their own lives. The FFLG groups are taught about advocacy, and some have had great success reaching out to local authorities and speaking their case, which have resulted in improved living standards in their villages and eased their lives;

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"For example, in one of the groups they had a challenge; they didn't have a connection with a road, there was a valley through they had to go, and they had been selling their maize at a pretty low price, because whoever came to buy had to hire men to take the maize across that valley, but because of the FFLG approach they learned that they could work together to solve a problem, they organized themselves, requested the sub-county provide materials and provide the good thinking that was support from the district and worked on the road, to me that is very good social capital, because this mobilization capacity"

Addressing official authorities in order to provide them with basic needs and infrastructural improvements requires that the members have the skills to identify these challenges, analyse them and argue their case, it seems the FFLG groups have gained these skills;

"Some of them have learned how to identify advocacy issues, to profile them and to identify the correct personnel level where this should be addressed, how to follow them up and how to profile the achievement"

"So now what happens with the group members of the FFLGs, because we teach them about advocacy, they take it upon themselves as individuals to mobilize the community members, to remind the different sub-county and district officials to do their part"

One element of Empowerment is ensuring people access to political decision-making, giving them the opportunity to participate in democratic processes (Desai & Potter, 2014). Advocacy is one part of this, but some groups have gone a step further than that. One of my informants told me that a few group members had been elected to positions in the local authorities, at regional or sub-county level. They did this because they had become aware of their power to influence the decision-making process, and wanted to work actively for organic agriculture in their communities. She attributed this to the FFLG approach, where they had learned about advocacy, and that they could play an active role in their own development.

Becoming empowered is not just about advocating for ones needs. In order to become agents of their own development, the members must realise their own potential and work towards a better future (Chambers, 1994). When I met with the groups, I asked them about their visions for the future, and how they were planning to fulfil them. Some groups told me what they wished to achieve, but they did not seem to have any clear idea of how to get there. I experienced that several of them seemed hesitant and it almost felt like they were waiting for someone else to take charge or give them the things they needed, in order to meet their challenges. I got that impression because these groups could not tell me what their plan was,

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to get where they wanted to go, for example opening up a shop or expand their farming. Instead, some of them asked what they could expect to get from me after my visit, and they were eager to tell me about all the tools and equipment they needed if they were going to work towards their goals. This might just be my interpretation, but it definitely showed a contrast to the other groups, who seemed much more aware of their own responsibility to take charge and work towards their goals. One woman told me that;

"We want to become a social commission of agriculture, a social commission of plantation. We want to become agents, a place where people can come and get knowledge and ideas. So that when they get ideas they can go and practice, and from that practice they can get money"

The group was aware of what steps they needed to go through, and the statement above shows a clear sense of agency and responsibility, which points to an empowered group of people, who is taking charge of their lives, as the quote in the beginning of this chapter said, empowerment is a process, where people move from insight to action (Rowlands, 1996).

This was also what I saw when I visited an internal facilitator who showed me around his farm and talked about his groups' work. Together they had managed to improve their production so much that they could sell their produce and save a lot of money together. They had spent the money on building materials and machines. They had now managed to build a whole new storage and processing facility. It was a big brick house with steel roof. Inside it was spacious and clean. They had bought two mills which they were going to use for their maize. By selling maize flour instead of fresh maize, they could store it for longer and sell it when the prices were high, earning more money.

Another group member showed me that the members wants to take responsibility for each other, and help the ones who do not have the means to improve their living situation;

"As a group, we would wish to have a community centre here, where we can come and share knowledge and skills on organic farming, and then from there you can go and implement at household level. Another dream we have is that most of them are still sleeping under bad houses, and we want to put more effort in farming so that we can build permanent houses for each farmer within the group"

So when it comes to empowerment, there seems to be great differences between the groups. It is important to notice, that some groups have existed longer than others, and would therefor naturally be further along in the process of becoming empowered and agents of change. This can explain some of these differences. My data suggests that the FFLG projects

have brought many types of benefits to the communities, not only when it comes to food security and knowledge, but also empowered many, giving the capacities they need to continue the work of improving their livelihoods, also after the projects have been completed. Others still have a long way to go, and seems to depend on others to lead the way when it comes to development.

9.0 Conclusions

Participation has been widely used within the world of international development since the beginning of the 1990s. It is a concept which has been subject to much critique, and many have claimed that it does not deliver the intended results, of empowering the poor and vulnerable, giving them a voice in every part of development projects and the capacities they need to be agents in their own development. Based on this concept of Participation, I have analysed the FFLG approach, to see how they deal with these critiques and looked at the changes these projects bring to the communities involved.

Organic Denmark say that the FFLG approach is intended to improve food security and livelihoods and built up social capital within the groups, and that the approach is designed so that the farmers takes ownership of their own development (Vaarst, et al., 2012). OD does not take their starting point in theories of Participatory Development, but they do use the words participation and empowerment, when writing about the approach. Instead of beginning with the theoretical concept, the approach was developed in response to what the staff witnessed on the ground, when working closely together with the local organisations and farmer families.

   My analysis have shown that, by paying close attention to the participating communities needs and challenges and building on principles of common learning, sharing and organic farming, OD has developed an approach which deals with many of the critiques otherwise set forth about development projects in general, and participatory development in particular. Through my analysis, we have seen how the FFLG approach involves stakeholders in all parts of the project, encourages the farmers to identify their own challenges and needs and come up with the solutions to these. The participatory methods used in the approach, has brought improvements to the communities, and some have come so far as to become empowered agents of their own development.

The long-running discussion about the concept of Participation has caused some people, both scholars and practitioners, to call it "The New Tyranny", claiming that it does no better

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than previous decades of attempts to eliminate poverty and improve livelihoods for the millions of vulnerable people on earth (Parfitt, 2004). Others have insisted on the transformational potential of the concept (Ibid). The FFFLG approach gives us a real-life example of a participatory development projects which overcomes many of the pitfalls of this very contested concept. It shows that while discussions and critical assessment of development approaches is always important, this does not mean that these approaches can be dismissed altogether. Instead, they can provide a starting point for developing context-specific projects, designed in collaboration with stakeholders and giving the benefitting communities as much ownership and power over decisions as possible.

The FFLG approach is not perfect, and does not provide all the solutions to the problems facing development practitioners around the world. But it shows great potential in providing both men women and children with the skills and knowledge they need to improve their lives. Building togetherness and the spirit of cooperation to these communities, it has helped them to see their own potential and give them the skills they need to move forward, even after the projects come to an end.

My research here is not sufficient, when it comes to giving a thorough understanding of the FFLG approach, how it works in practice and how it transforms the communities involved. There is a need for much more research on the approach, which can investigate the participatory methods used, identify Best Practices and shed some light on its transformational and empowering potential. With academic research about the approach, NOGAMU, SATNET and OD can work actively to improve the approach where needed, to spread its use in Uganda, advocate for its use in official extension services and continue to develop it to fit new contexts and challenges.

The Human Security framework was presented as a new way of thinking about development issues, with a focus on people instead of states, aiming at empowering the poor, giving them choices and access to the decisions that affect their lives (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). Participatory development became increasingly popular during the same time as the Human Security framework gained recognition, offering an approach which would bring just that; empowerment and capacity to change. Human Security has a holistic focus on development, where the seven components not only look at economic welfare, but also things such as Food Security and the support and help that comes with being part of a community (Ibid). These components are interlinked and they influence each other.

In the FFLG projects, the group members have shown how these different components

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of Human Security are closely connected. The groups have experienced improved food security, which has brought them additional incomes, and made them less economic insecure. They have used their improved financial situation to invest in education for their children or equipment which can improve their business even more. Through improved organic practices, they are actively working to protect the natural environment in which they live, contributing to improved Environmental Security. These are just a few examples of how participatory nature of the FFLG projects have contributed to Human Security for the farmer families involved, and it shows how the Human Security framework provides us with a way of looking at development that does not only measure economic growth, but see the detailed linkages between different areas of peoples' lives and development.

In a world where poverty, climate change and unequal opportunities keep millions of people in a state of insecurity and vulnerability, international development still has much work to do in the coming decades. The optimistic view of the 1960s, that hunger and poverty could be ended within a few decades, has long been thrown to a side. Participation is one of the latest in a long list of approaches that offers a solution to these problems, and despite much debate about its usefulness in the field, it has now spread to every corner of the world, and is being used in large international agencies and small grassroots NGOs alike. The Farmer family Learning Group approach has the potential to help smallholder farmers in many countries improve their lives and move towards a better future. The approach has spread from Uganda to Tanzania and is now being adjusted to a new context, when the first projects in Asia will be initiated in the coming years. OD is working to spread the FFLGs in Bhutan, and helping the country in their goal of becoming 100% organic.

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