



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Farmer field schools

Gender equality, social inclusion
and community empowerment

EXPERIENCES FROM UGANDA – KARAMOJA SUB-REGION

Case study



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Acronyms

APFS	Agro-pastoralist field school
ESP	Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equity Division (FAO)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer field schools
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDI	Gender development index
GDP	Gross domestic product
HDI	Human development index
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IHDI	Inequality-adjusted human development index
IPM	Integrated pest management
IPPM	Integrated production and pest management
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MPI	Multidimensional poverty index
NENA	Near East and North Africa
NSP	Plant Production and Protection Division (FAO)
SP	Strategic Programme (FAO)
VSLs	Village savings and loan scheme
WB	World Bank



Member of the FFS working in the field in Uganda, Karamoja

1

Introduction

The farmer field school (FFS) approach, with its flexibility to adapt to local priorities and contexts, has been used worldwide for decades. Initially, FFS programmes were related mainly to integrated pest management (IPM), but soon they were adapted to suit other technical domains. FFSs help not only to build the technical capacity of farmers, but also contribute significantly towards community development, including social dynamics, gender equality and social inclusion within the context of social vulnerabilities. Farmer field schools allow people to make more informed decisions. There is therefore great potential for quality FFS programmes to improve the livelihoods of rural communities, and reduce vulnerabilities and rural poverty through the process of empowerment. At the same time, a deeper understanding of these aspects is

crucial in order to develop better strategies for improving social inclusion, refine FFS programmes' impact assessment tools and fulfil the FFS approach's potential in future activities, programmes and adaptations.

It is for this purpose that a series of case studies on farmer field schools, gender equality, social inclusion and community empowerment were initiated, the first phase of which was begun in Jordan and Tunisia, before being expanded through a second phase in Senegal and Uganda. It was launched by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Plant Production and Protection Division (NSP, formerly known as AGP) and implemented in collaboration with the FAO Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equity Division (ESP), the FAO Rural Poverty Reduction Strategic Programme (SP3), the SP3 Regional Initiative on Small-

Scale Agriculture for Inclusive Development in the Near East and North Africa, and the FAO offices in Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Senegal and Uganda.

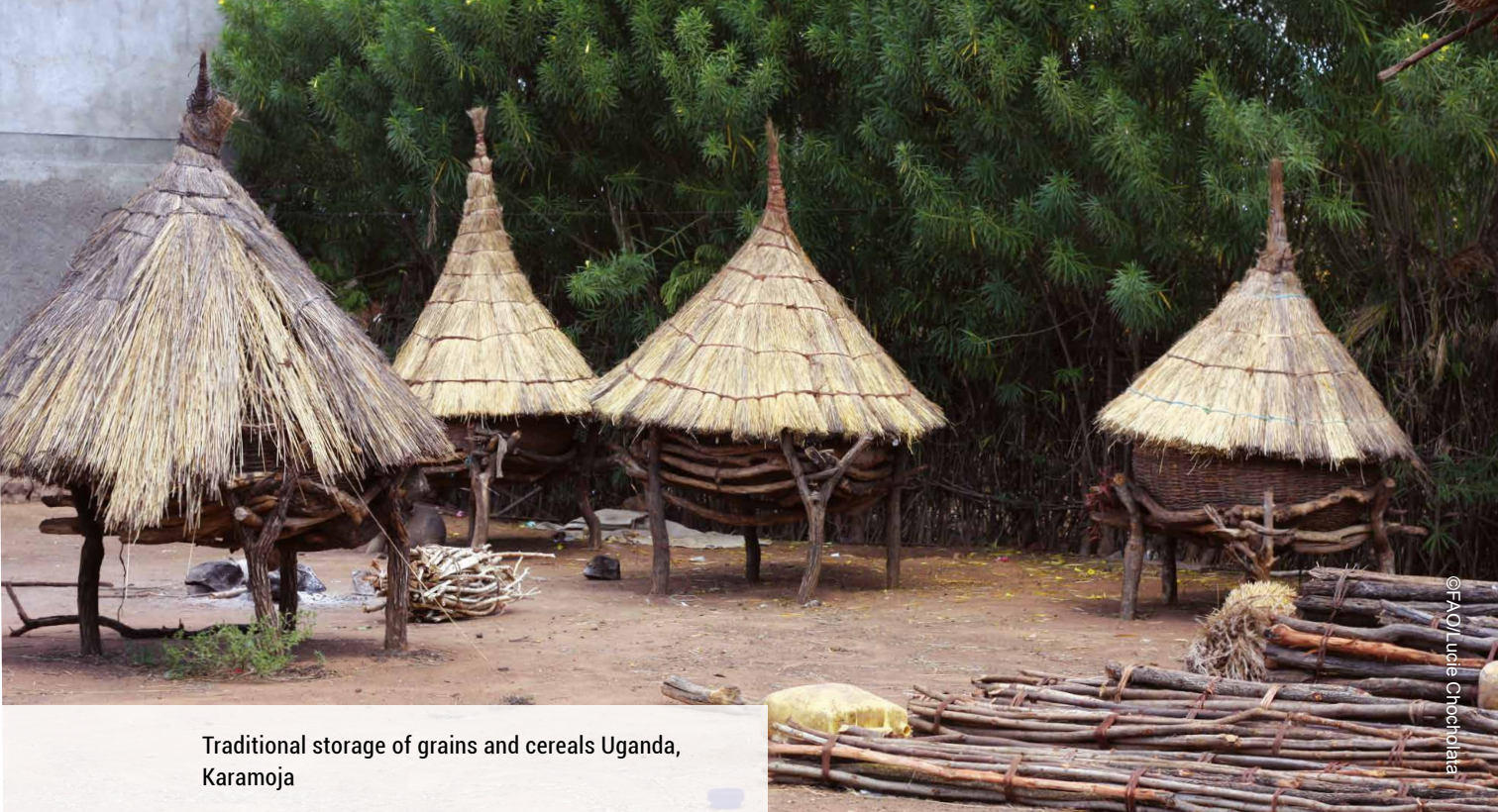
Uganda has extensive and long-standing experience with the development and implementation of the FFSs/APFSs, (terms which are used interchangeably in this document). The FFS/APFS approach, initially promoted by FAO, has evolved within the context of a longer-term strategy, and its development process and implementation have become a programme. It is therefore in alignment with national frameworks and being implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the ministry's institutions, and NGOs involved in the areas of food security and agricultural livelihoods. The FFS approach was introduced to Uganda and other countries in East Africa as far back as 1995. Since 2012, the adapted version of this approach, the agro-pastoralist field school (APFS), has been used in various contexts as a **“cost-effective and flexible alternative for provision of, or supplementation of weak, extension services with the ultimate aim of building social, economic and human capital.”** (FAO, 2016) FFSs/APFSs have been supporting households facing difficulties related to climate change by helping them to adapt their crop and livestock farming systems, improving communities' post-conflict and protracted crisis recovery process, and helping them shift from subsistence to market-oriented production, as well as building resilience among agro-pastoral communities to permit them to cope with

The agro-pastoralist field school (APFS), has been used in various contexts as a “cost-effective and flexible alternative for provision of, or supplementation of weak, extension services with the ultimate aim of building social, economic and human capital.”

FAO, 2016

semi-arid and degraded land. The approach has been used to deliver a wide range of context-specific assistance covering agricultural skill-building, integrated production and pest management (IPPM), revitalization of seed systems, services for animal health, livelihood diversification, and environmental, land and water management. The incorporation of village/group savings and loan schemes (VSLs), and their linking to savings mobilization in order to support production processes, has added a great deal of value to the APFSs (FAO, 2015).

Building on this experience and that of the first phase of the scoping exercise conducted in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region, a field visit took place in order to support the efforts of FAO Uganda in its FFS-/APFS-related work and assessment, as well as assist with information generation and sharing at the regional level. This case study supplements the *Economic analysis of the Farmer Field School approach* conducted by FAO Uganda in 2016. The main objective of this exercise has been to collect and analyse the experiences of FFS/APFS



Traditional storage of grains and cereals Uganda, Karamoja

members, graduates and practitioners – e.g. project staff focusing on FFS/APFS – in relation to gender equality, social inclusion, and individual and community empowerment, as well as changes to these as a result of participation in an FFS/APFS, while also confirming the relevance and/or importance of certain related thematic areas. Furthermore, the purpose of the initiative is to make farmers' experiences more visible, and not only demonstrate the impact of FFS/APFS programmes, but also use these experiences in future implementations of the FFS/APFS approach. By identifying gaps in knowledge and opportunities, achievements and challenges, and best practices and lessons learnt, this exercise aims to provide an insight into and

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deeper understanding of the FFSs'/APFSs' gender and social dimensions. It offers the opportunity to reflect on this cross-cutting dimension to allow these aspects to be better incorporated into the broader FFS/APFS discussion and its wider work. The exercise also identifies the needs of FFS/APFS facilitators in their work with issues

of gender equality, social inclusion and community empowerment, and examines the relevance of related concepts and approaches and its modalities. A review of the existing work on strengthening gender equality and improving access for vulnerable groups within the context of FFS/APFS programmes has also been conducted.

The exercise's main thematic areas of the exercise are gender equality and women's empowerment, social inclusion and community empowerment, with additional areas including nutrition-related decision-making and sustainable agricultural production, and in some cases, access to and control over natural resources. Within the context of the protracted crisis that affected the Karamoja sub-region, another two areas clearly emerged from the interviews: food security and gender-based violence (GBV). In this document, some of the farmers' stories are provided, in which they describe their experience and changes in their personal and professional lives.

This work is also rooted in FAO's wider work on gender equality and the empowerment of women, as guided by its Policy on Gender Equality (2012–2025), which clearly states that "gender equality is central to FAO's mandate to achieve food security for all by raising levels of nutrition, improving agricultural productivity and natural resource management, and improving the lives of rural populations. FAO can achieve its goals only if it simultaneously works towards gender equality and supports women's diverse roles in agriculture and rural

development. Gender equality is not only an essential means by which FAO can achieve its mandate, it is also an acknowledged basic human right." (FAO, 2012)

The FAO Policy on Gender Equality includes a clear approach and guidance for ensuring that the Organization actively and systematically promotes gender equality in all its areas of its work. "FAO believes that progress towards eliminating hunger and poverty will result from: (i) ensuring that its programmes, and projects as well as its normative work, reduce the gap between rural women and men in access to productive resources and services; (ii) ensuring that women and men have the ability to influence programme and policy decision-making, and building institutional responsiveness and accountability (voice); and (iii) ensuring that rural women and men can take up economic opportunities to improve their individual and household wellbeing (agency)." (FAO, 2012)

The FAO Strategic Programme 3 documentation also makes clear that "women play a critical role in securing enough nutritious food on the table as much as in contributing to income generating capacity of rural households. Addressing inequalities between women and men in access to productive resources, services, and economic opportunities should therefore be an essential ingredient of food security and rural poverty reduction strategies." (FAO, 2014)

Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue, and within the FAO strategic framework it is treated as such. It should be fully incorporated throughout all five Strategic Programmes, and address gender inequality issues based on a sound gender analysis. FAO is currently focusing on its work on the social aspects of agriculture in order to better target its work, reach the most vulnerable, and make agriculture more equitable and sustainable. In this context, farmer field schools (i.e. quality FFS/APFS programmes) are an excellent example of an approach that can make a difference. Working towards poverty reduction (most of the poor live in rural areas), improving livelihoods and empowering rural communities is today of paramount importance, and plays a key role in

increasing stability, and therefore security, both nationally and regionally. It also has an effect on international and village-to-town migration. It is therefore extremely relevant to talk about the social dimensions of development work within the context of agriculture.

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5. Knowledge
on VSLA
methodologies
and saving
and loaning
has made
the group
members

FFS are enabling positive changes at the personal
and community level

2

Methodological note

This work is based on and has been developed using the **constructivist paradigm** (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), with some overlaps with the critical theory paradigm (Morrow and Brown, 1994) and its transformative orientation, using methods and approaches common to both (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005) According to these paradigms, multiple constructs, rather than realities, are formed in specific local, social and historical contexts (influenced by political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender aspects). These constructs are perceived as realities, and as such, influence people's lives. They are shared by and among individuals, groups and often cultures. They change over time as those who constructed them become more informed and aware. Within the context of research, knowledge is constructed through the interaction between a particular investigator (or investigators)

and a particular respondent (or respondents) who are interactively linked. There is no relation of independence between the investigator and the respondent (the "object" of the investigation, as the positivist paradigm would refer to them). The critical theory goes further, focusing primarily

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on transformation by understanding how structures are constructed, how they can be changed and what is required in order to effect change (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

FAO Uganda has been approaching FFSs/APFSs from a theory of change perspective. This theory defines a vision and long-term goals, identifies necessary preconditions, and plots the road maps for change, while also including guiding principles and key interventions. It describes the process of change; in other words, how the desired change should occur. Ideally, the theory of change should be developed and formulated by all stakeholders, or at least reflect their experiences and ambitions. It should take into account the wider context in which individuals and organizations are operating. The *theory of change* method is usually thought of as belonging to the critical theory paradigm. This document should help FAO Uganda to take into account and incorporate the findings of the individual and focus group discussions with FFS/APFS members and graduates focusing on their participation in FFSs/APFSs and the social changes this has produced or facilitated.

FFS/APFS members, graduates, facilitators, master trainers and other FFS/APFS practitioners have been actively involved in the exploration. This part of the exercise uses **qualitative methods** (Quisimbing *et al.*, 2014) – although some data may lend itself to quantitative analysis – to collect information through **focus group discussions and individual discussions**, working with open-ended/basic guiding questions covering

Questions focused on farmers' self-perception of their opportunities and power over their lives, as well as changes at the professional, personal and community level as a result of their participation in the FFSs/APFSs.

the main thematic areas (see Annexes). This allows for changes to the flow and content of the discussion in the event that the interviewee expresses something which, in their opinion, is more relevant or important to the discussion. The focus group discussions helped participants to formulate and express their collective experience and opinions. For FFS/APFS members and graduates, the discussion and guiding questions focused on **farmers' self-perception of their opportunities and power over their lives, as well as changes at the professional, personal and community level as a result of their participation in the FFSs/APFSs** (see Friis-Hansen, Duveskog, and Taylor, 2011). Some authors (Roeschel *et al.*, 2016) suggest that data on individual's perceptions of change help us to understand the local dimensions of a study's area of interest, and are able to provide information related to ongoing social, economic or environmental changes. Furthermore, they enable local communities to be involved in decision-making and become protagonists in sustainable development processes that are being implemented at the local level. These same authors advocate the use of big data, where available, alongside local



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Facilitators are a key element for the success of a FFS

change perception data, as the effects of global challenges manifest themselves at the local level. A wide range of variables, which probably cannot be reflected on a large scale, affect these data. The authors consider data on *individual perceptions of change* to be a cost-effective option allowing policymakers to act without the availability of big data.

A number of farmers approached by way of purposive sampling were asked to share their **stories**, their experiences of the FFS/APFS, and related changes in their personal and professional lives. This offers an opportunity to gain insight into their lives as told through their **own voices**. Both the focus group and individual discussions took place in environments where farmers usually

A number of farmers approached by way of purposive sampling were asked to share their stories, their experiences of the FFS/APFS, and related changes in their personal and professional lives. This offers an opportunity to gain insight into their lives as told through their own voices.

meet and therefore were familiar to them, and they tended to have a rather informal atmosphere. Interactive methods were used to discuss some of the questions/thematic areas, and data from the exercise were collected in a sex-disaggregated manner. In total, **six focus group discussions** were

Figure 1
FFS graduates having participated in focus group discussions

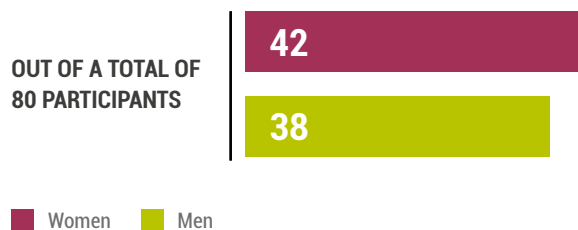
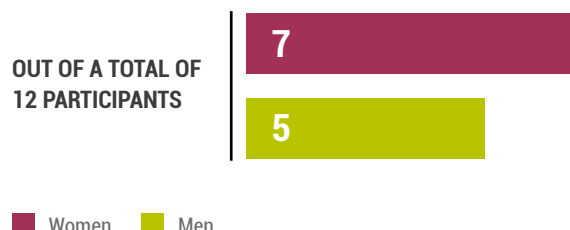


Figure 2
FFS graduates having participated in individual in-depth interviews



held with farmers in six villages across the two districts of Nakapiripirit and Amudat in the Karamoja sub-region, involving 80 FFS/APFS members and graduates (W – 42, M– 38) and 12 in-depth individual interviews (W – 7, M – 5; see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

The two districts were selected in the first stage of the preparatory process, and different localities were subsequently visited during the field work. Translation was used from and to national languages where needed and depending on locality. The farmers who participated in the exercise joined their FFS/APFS between 2009 and 2015. The main farming systems/agricultural activities covered were cereal (maize, millet, sorghum) and legume production, horticultural crops, livestock production, and beekeeping and honey production and processing. While one of the focus group discussions was conducted with FFS/APFS members based in a peri-urban context, all other FFSs/APFSs were held in purely rural areas. (Village) saving schemes (VSLs) were an integral part of all the FFS/APFS groups visited. All groups

had also undergone a formalization process,¹ and most had implemented crop storage techniques. Discussions with FFS/APFS facilitators and other practitioners² focused primarily on their experiences with topics such as gender equality, women’s empowerment and social inclusion during FFS/APFS programmes, the relevance of certain approaches, ways of including such areas, and their needs related to this work. Furthermore, the discussions offered opportunities for joint reflection and lesson learning. For **FFS/APFS facilitators and other practitioners, both focus group discussions and individual ones with key informants (11 participants, W – 4, M - 7)** were carried out. All participants in this exercise were informed of the purpose of the study and how the collected information would be used.

¹ At the end of the first APFS learning cycle, all groups were formalized by registering with the lowest administrative unit. The community-based services sector has a mandate to mobilize and facilitate communities’ participation in development at the local level. There is a dedicated government programme focusing on community-driven development (CDD) supporting these processes.

² E.g. project/programme staff focusing on FFS/APFS.



Group discussion, FFS group, Uganda, Karamoja

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The exercise's **main thematic areas** are the following: **gender equality and women's empowerment**; **social inclusion** (this may cover social vulnerability, ethnicity, age, etc.); social protection in terms of **community empowerment** (collective action, building of community-based social support systems/safety nets/mechanisms, formal and informal organizations). **Nutrition-related decision-making** (dietary diversity/improved diet, health), **sustainable agricultural production**, and access to and control over natural resources were also partially covered (see Figure 3). An additional two areas to clearly emerge from the interviews were food security and gender-based violence (GBV).

An analysis of the most relevant lessons learnt and **success stories** was carried out

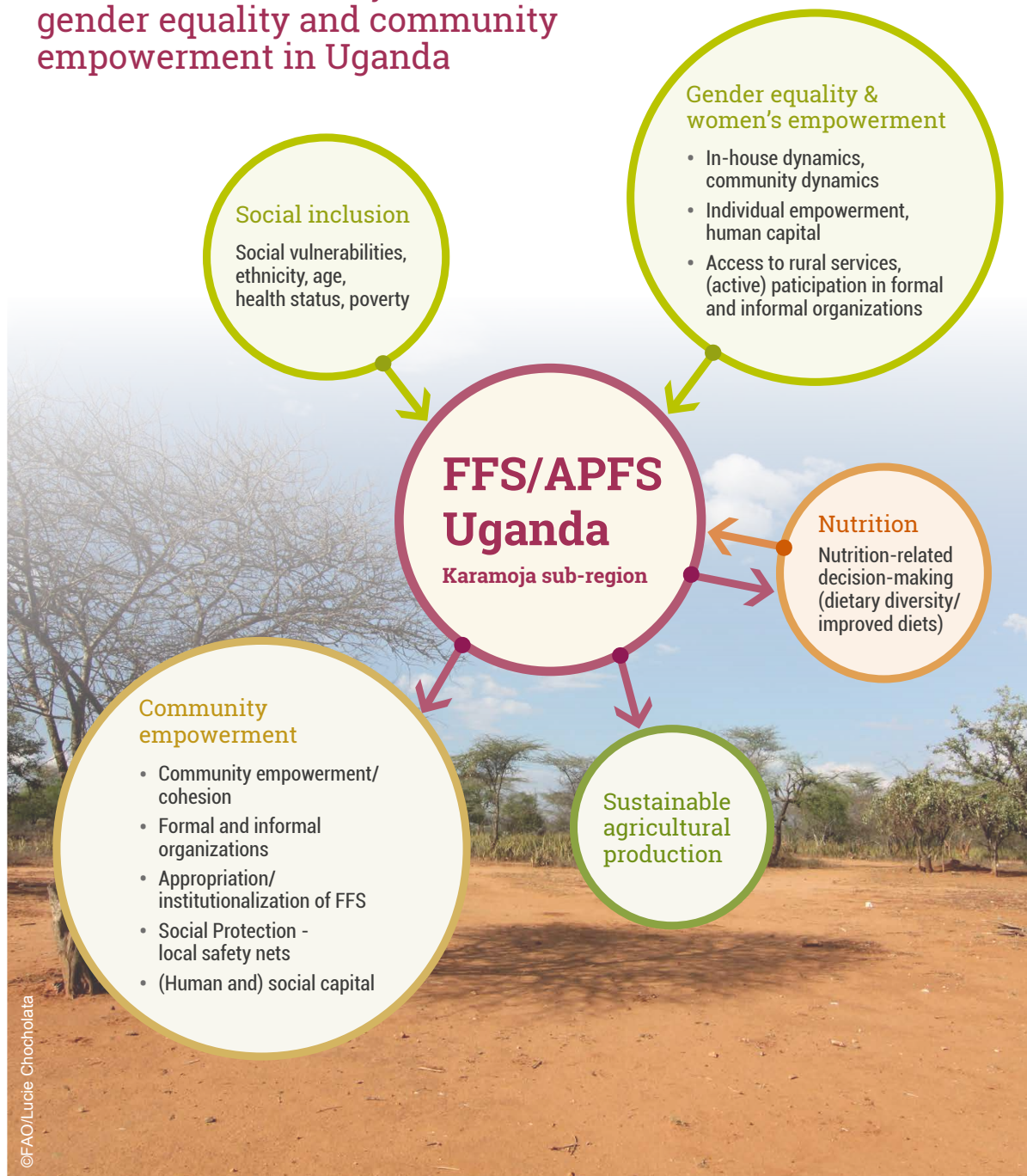
with the objective of identifying **examples of good practice** in relation to gender mainstreaming, individual and community empowerment, and social inclusion. Attention was also given to the role of FFSs/APFSs in strengthening existing formal and informal organizations and prompting the creation of new ones.

The exercise was developed in order to explore the thematic areas described above within the context of the FFS/APFS programme, and **initiate discussion of the following broader questions**:

- What areas/aspects are relevant to the discussion of the social dimensions of FFSs?
- What concepts and terms are relevant to such a discussion?

Figure 3 Main thematic areas of the exercise

Themes of case study on FFSs, gender equality and community empowerment in Uganda



- What needs to be taken into consideration when talking about gender equality, women's empowerment, social inclusion and community empowerment within the context of the FFS programme?
- What is the experience of FFS members, facilitators and practitioners with these thematic areas?
- How do people perceive their current situation and the changes they have experienced? How do they express this?
- How could such experiences be translated and shared?
- Are there common patterns across these various and rich experiences?
- How could better use be made of the FFSs' potential to strengthen gender equality, women's empowerment, social inclusion and community empowerment?
- What do FFS practitioners need to better work with/feel more comfortable when working with these thematic areas?
- What might be the project-/programme-related implications (in terms of design, implementation, M&E/MEL/impact assessment)?

Moreover, data were also collected through a **desk review** of relevant information in the available literature, project documents and reports.

The potential of participatory methods as a means of interactive learning and empowerment.

Factors such as the limited time period and number of farmers interviewed could be perceived as a limitation. However, this concern could be addressed by a more in-depth study or studies at the national or regional level, or else through systematic monitoring and evaluation efforts to build on the knowledge acquired using the lessons learnt during this exercise. The potential of participatory methods as a means of interactive learning and empowerment could then be further made use of/capitalized on. If the sample is relatively large, complementarity with quantitative methods would no doubt be an advantage.



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Many FFS groups continue working together after the initial programme terminates



3

Experiences from Uganda

3.1 Context

Uganda has a population of 44.27 million, (UNSD, 2019) and is classified as a low-income economy with a per capita gross national income (GNI) of USD 620.³ Its Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.528, which is in the low human development category, and the country is ranked 160 out of 188 countries and territories (UNDP, 2019)⁴. However, when inequality in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices at the national level is taken into account using the inequality-

³ GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US\$). WB, 2018.

⁴ UNDP, 2019. Furthermore, gender disaggregation of the HDI reveals gender inequalities in the achievement of the three HDI areas: health, education and control over economic resources. Uganda's female HDI value stands at 0.484, while its male HDI is 0.561, resulting in a Gender Development Index (GDI) value of 0.863.

adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), which deducts from the HDI value for inequality, the country's HDI falls to 0.387. This represents a reduction of 26.7 percent (UNDP, 2019). Uganda has an annual population growth rate of 3.3 percent, one of the highest in the world (UNSD, 2019). In 2016, 21.4 percent of its population lived under the national poverty line (WB, 2020), with this rising to 34 percent in rural areas (IFAD, 2020). However, according to UNDP, 55.1 percent of the population experience multidimensional poverty, while an additional 24.9 percent live in conditions approaching multidimensional poverty.⁵ The proportion of the population that is undernourished is 41 percent (FAO, 2019). The food and nutritional security situation in the Karamoja sub-region differs from the rest of the country mainly in that it experiences stress, as well as some areas of the northern region. This is the consequence of poverty or failed harvests resulting from adverse weather conditions. There are considerable disparities in household food consumption across the country.

The country's total area of land is 241 551 km², 30 percent of which is considered highly degraded (FAO, 2017). The agricultural sector's contribution to national gross domestic product (GDP) is 24.2 percent (WB, 2018). Close to 76 percent of the population live in rural areas (WB, 2018), and agriculture, primarily in the form

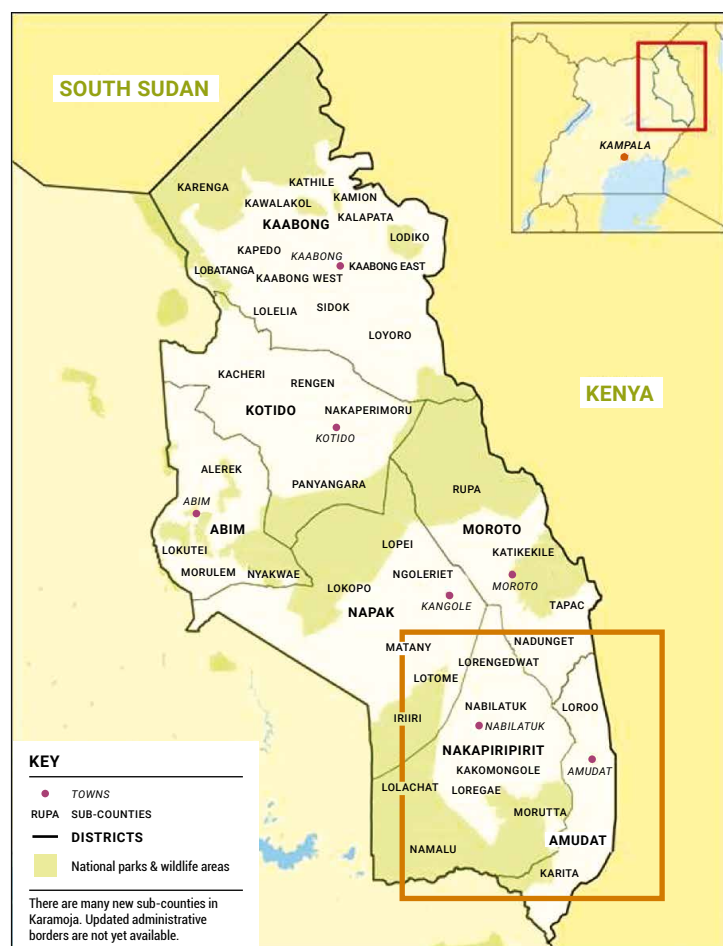
of subsistence farming, is their principal livelihood. Most farmers (95 percent) are smallholders with landholdings averaging two hectares (FAO, 2017). Agriculture employs 65.6 percent of the formal labour force (FAO, 2014). Women are very much involved in the production, processing and marketing of agricultural products. A common pattern in many countries is the underestimation of women's contribution to agriculture, despite the fact that they are providing a significant portion of the agricultural work. This is mostly due to the informal nature of their involvement, which often takes the form of unpaid labour on family farms. Most women remain outside labour statistics and thus invisible to policymakers. Furthermore, women are facing their own particular obstacles, such as access to land (decision-making over land), information, extension services, capital and microfinance facilities, as well as cultural barriers due to the fact that women's agricultural work is perceived as auxiliary and an extension of their household responsibilities. Of course, some of these barriers are also faced by poverty-stricken, vulnerable and often landless men. Thus, women, especially those in rural areas, continue to have to contend with a traditional (albeit changing) male-led cultural system.

⁵ The Multidimensional Poverty Index identifies multiple overlapping deprivations experienced by households by considering three areas: education, health and living standards.

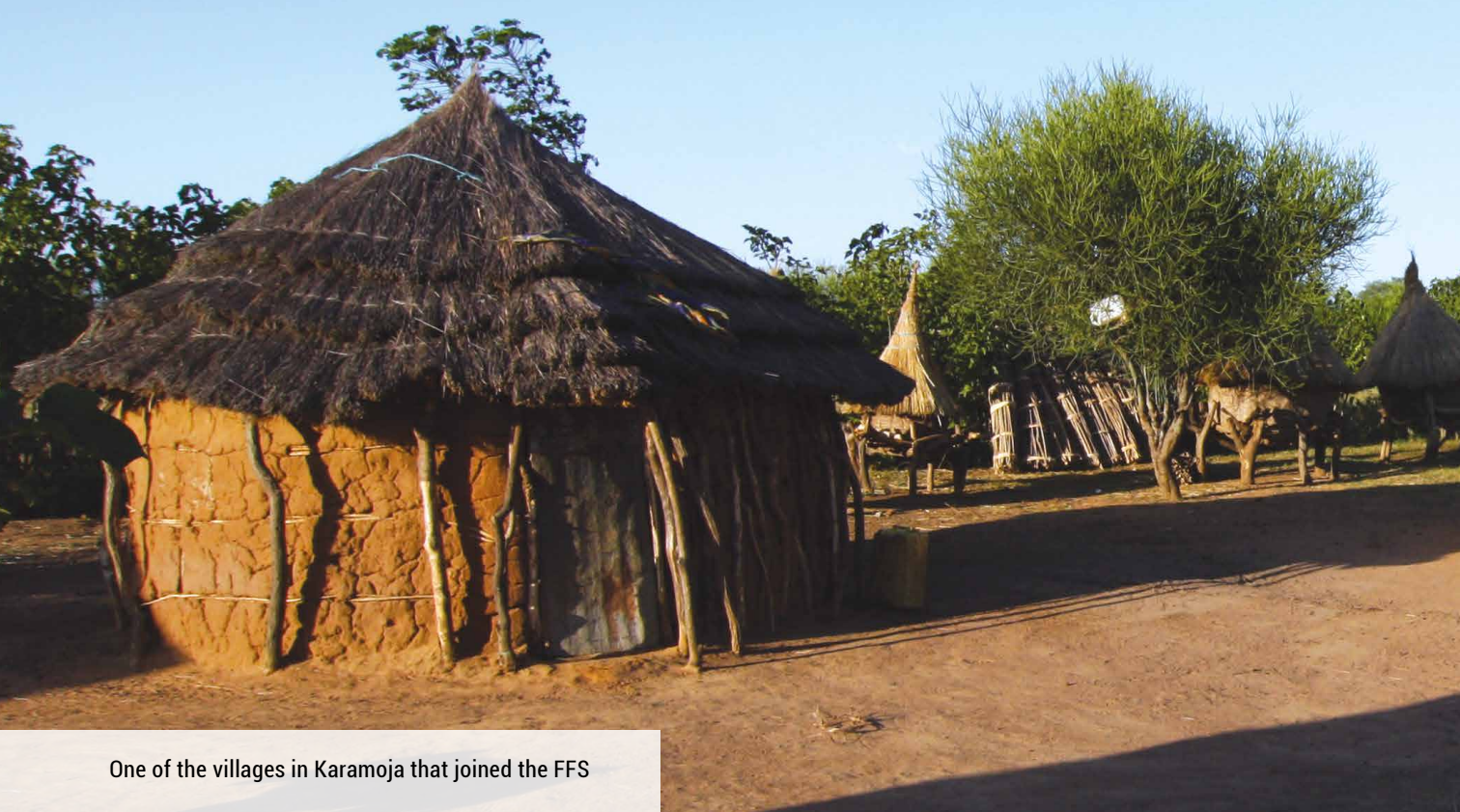
Karamoja is a sub-region in north-eastern Uganda, bordering Kenya, which covers an area of 27 200 km² and is divided into seven districts, two of which were visited as part of this study. This semi-arid sub-region is characterized by periodic and extended droughts, and low and irregular annual levels of rainfall, with an average annual precipitation of 400–1 000 millimetres. (Howe, Stites and

Akabwai, 2015) Unfavourable environmental conditions contribute to the chronic poverty and food insecurity the local populations face. Around 1.2 million people live in Karamoja, with approximately 70 percent residing in rural areas. The majority of Karamoja inhabitants belong to the three largest ethnic groups: the Dodoth, Jie and Karimojong (which includes the Matheniko, Bokora and Pian peoples). There are also

Figure 4 Areas visited



Source: Human Rights Watch, adapted



One of the villages in Karamoja that joined the FFS

other smaller ethnic groups, including the Pokot, Ik, Tepeth and Labwor. (Human Rights Watch, 2014)

Karamoja has the poorest human development indicators in Uganda. Local communities subsist through a combination of pastoral and agro-pastoral work. In fact, a common livelihood strategy employed by the Karamoja communities is limited rainfed crop cultivation⁶ during the wet season and semi-nomadic pastoralism. (Stites *et al.*, 2007) The availability of animal protein, grains, wild fruits and wild greens is pivotal in ensuring these communities'

⁶ Sorghum can be found on around 70% of the cultivated land in Karamoja. Other cereal crops include maize, millet and wheat. Of the oil seed crops, the most commonly cultivated are sunflowers, groundnuts and sesame seeds.

While there are a growing number of families that have turned almost exclusively to agriculture (especially in western and southern Karamoja where more fertile areas can be found), livestock ownership remains essential to cultural identity and a symbol of economic and social status.

food security. Factors such as climate variability, the designation/reservation of land for wildlife conservation and hunting have limited the mobility of traditionally pastoralist and agro-pastoralist populations and made them more vulnerable to food insecurity. Additionally, the developing mining sector in Karamoja could reflect



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diverging interests in relation to land use, as well as a potential environmental concern.

While there are a growing number of families that have turned almost exclusively to agriculture (especially in western and southern Karamoja where more fertile areas can be found), livestock ownership remains essential to cultural identity and a symbol of economic and social status. (Howe, Stites and Akabwai, 2015) Traditionally, an official marriage includes an exchange of cattle, which is the price the man pays to the family of the bride. A marriage transaction involving cattle means the man is recognized as an adult member of the community and is able to participate in decision-making. The woman is recognized as a member of her husband's community,

Karamoja has experienced high levels of conflict and insecurity for decades.

and this gives her the right to protection for herself and her children, as well as the right to inherit her husband's cattle in the event of his death. Children, both boys and girls, are traditionally valued: boys for their role in maintaining family herds, and girls for the future cattle that the family will receive as a bride price. (Stites *et al.*, 2007)

Karamoja has experienced high levels of conflict and insecurity for decades. A number of social, cultural, economic, political and security-related factors have

intensified the erosion of the traditional age-based and male-led power system, as well as social roles, interaction, ties and trust. In the past, community authorities in the form of elders, and the social norms arising as a result, permitted raiding. The raided cattle played an important role in redistributing wealth and food in periods of scarcity, building alliances with other groups, and granting young men social status, as well as, as has previously been mentioned, serving as bride price (Stites *et al.*, 2007 and Howe, Stites and Akabwai, 2015). Manhood in Karamoja has been traditionally associated with the need for status, prestige and respect from the community, as well as the ability to marry, which is closely connected with wealth and cattle ownership. (Avis, 2016) The use of the analytical framework of protracted crisis,⁷ and thus a move beyond the post-conflict perspective, helps to make clear how such an environment is shaping norms, social connections, networks and social capital. This in turn allows us to see how this is influencing the attitudes and aspirations of the populations in Karamoja, in particular in terms of gender and masculinity roles, and violence. The dismantling of livelihood roles based on cattle ownership has for many young men been a challenge that has negatively affected their self-worth and status. This has contributed to the phenomenon of violence and crime. Moreover, protracted crises in

combination with security issues and a decrease in trust may cause a breakdown of systems of shared norms within a society (Avis, 2016). Thus, poverty, resulting in frustration among communities and the proliferation of small arms, are leading to the intensification of increasingly violent raids carried out primarily by young men (with the possible support of other community and family members). As a result, not only was cattle raiding taking place for the purpose of meeting families' needs, but there was also a significant increase in commercial raiding, incentivized by the creation of its own market and related supporting structures which were ready to facilitate and absorb such illicit transactions (Stites *et al.*, 2007). Poverty and instability undercut an already weak market system and decreased the Karamoja populations' opportunities to secure their livelihoods in legitimate ways.

Karamoja underwent a major government disarmament programme with the objective of freeing the region from guns and thus reducing armed conflicts between groups, causing deaths and the loss of livestock. The first voluntary phase was launched in 2001, offering incentives to those who deposited their weapons. The process was complicated by a series of interconnected aspects. First, those who decided to take part in the campaign were left unprotected and were often attacked by groups that had kept their guns. Second, this phase ended too early, with a significant proportion of army units being transferred to northern Uganda the year after. As a result, many of the disarmed population looked for new

⁷ "Environments in which a significant proportion of the population is acutely vulnerable to death, disease and disruption of livelihoods over a prolonged period of time. The impacts of protracted crisis are multifaceted and long running, including both economic and social consequences" (Avis, 2016).



FFS field, Uganda, Karamoja

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weapons in order to protect themselves from raids. The second phase of the government campaign, this time mandatory, started in 2006 and included large-scale armed operations. Unfortunately, human rights violations and the abuse of civilians were very common: many people lost their lives and there were significant losses of livestock. (Stites *et al.*, 2007)

For generations, the migration patterns of pastoral communities were based on the availability of water and pasture conditions. In Karamoja, these regular movements have become less frequent in recent decades due to the increase in armed raids in the 1970s. This threat and an overall context of insecurity negatively impacted relations among communities in Karamoja

(Stites *et al.*, 2007), although these are now recovering. There are indications of improved inter-ethnic relations, with groups increasing social and economic interactions and the sharing of resources (including inter-marriage trade and the hiring of agricultural labour). These increased interactions help to re-build trust and decrease stigma. However, tensions with other groups in Kenya (and South Sudan) still exist, as the disarmament occurred on the Ugandan side, but not in neighbouring countries. (Howe, Stites and Akabwai, 2015)

Overall security in Karamoja has improved, and violent raids and cattle rustling between groups has decreased. This is mostly attributed to the disarmament campaign, and some authors suggest that

the Nabilatuk/Moruitit Resolution,⁸ which obliges the perpetrator of a theft to return double the number of stolen cattle plus one more, has been an important factor. The improved security situation has increased mobility, facilitated access to markets and areas suitable for agriculture, and increased connections with groups from outside Karamoja. This has contributed towards improved food security and the diversification of livelihoods. However, the issue of the theft of household and agricultural assets remains and constitutes a serious difficulty for vulnerable populations to recover from. In the absence of viable livelihoods, it is more likely that people will continue to turn to illegal ways of securing income. Gender-based domestic violence and forced marriages (including those involving underage girls) seem to be continuing unabated, and while there is limited assistance available,⁹ this is paradoxically further victimizing the mostly female victims. Women, especially widows and wives in polygamous marriages, are most threatened by loss of land or access to it. For women in Karamoja, the production and sale of natural products is an important source of income (Howe, Stites and Akabwai, 2015).

Illiteracy in Karamoja has in the past been high. To tackle this situation, in 1998 the local district government introduced a non-formal education programme known as ABEK (Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja). Some authors point to the programme, as well as other non-formal education approaches introduced to the sub-region, as significantly contributing to the stabilization of peace and security¹⁰ in Karamoja, despite the fact that they were not specifically designed with peacebuilding or peace education in mind. The positive impact of improving the security situation and social cohesion occurred as an unintended consequence. (Datzberger, 2017)

Karamoja faces pressure on its natural resources, and the unregulated land tenure system does not offer enough protection to local inhabitants from the private sector, which is able to easily access such land. Furthermore, the most suitable areas for agriculture are often the same ones that are used as dry season pastures and waterpoints. Factors such as population growth and ongoing changes in climate are likely to intensify the pressure on limited natural resources. (Howe, Stites and Akabwai, 2015)

⁸ The Nabilatuk Resolution (2012 in Nakapiripirit), later adopted as the Moruitit Resolution, has been the key measure in preventing cattle raiding and theft. The Nabilatuk Resolution covered southern Karamoja and later, due to its effectiveness, was extended to other districts in northern Karamoja as the Moruitit Resolution (Howe, Stites and Akabwai, 2015). In 2015, the agreement was adopted at a tripartite meeting of Uganda, Kenya and South Sudan as the Lokichogio Resolution.

⁹ From village leaders and local Peace Committees within whose structures women are underrepresented.

¹⁰ "...it is important to acknowledge that (non-formal education) ... (like formal education) can either enhance or pose a serious risk towards peacebuilding and security in conflict-affected settings. A programme's impact can range from providing education in a conflict-sensitive manner (as later illustrated in the case of ABEK in Uganda) to being misused by military groups to radicalize students." (Datzberger, 2017).

3.2 Main findings, considerations and challenges

As described in the methodological note, the focus group discussions served as an environment for the formulation and expression of collective experiences, opinions, perceptions and ideas related to the farmers' participation in the FFSs/APFSs, as well as any changes resulting from this participation in their professional, personal and community lives. Some of the graduates shared more in-depth information during the individual discussions.

The following text summarises the main findings and points in common that emerged from the discussions. It is divided into three sections, the first covering the **farmers' experiences**, and the second focusing on **what the FFS/APFS practitioners see as important** for this discussion and for unlocking and boosting the FFSs' potential to effect more profound social change. The third section summarizes the **main challenges** emerging from the focus group discussions and individual interviews.

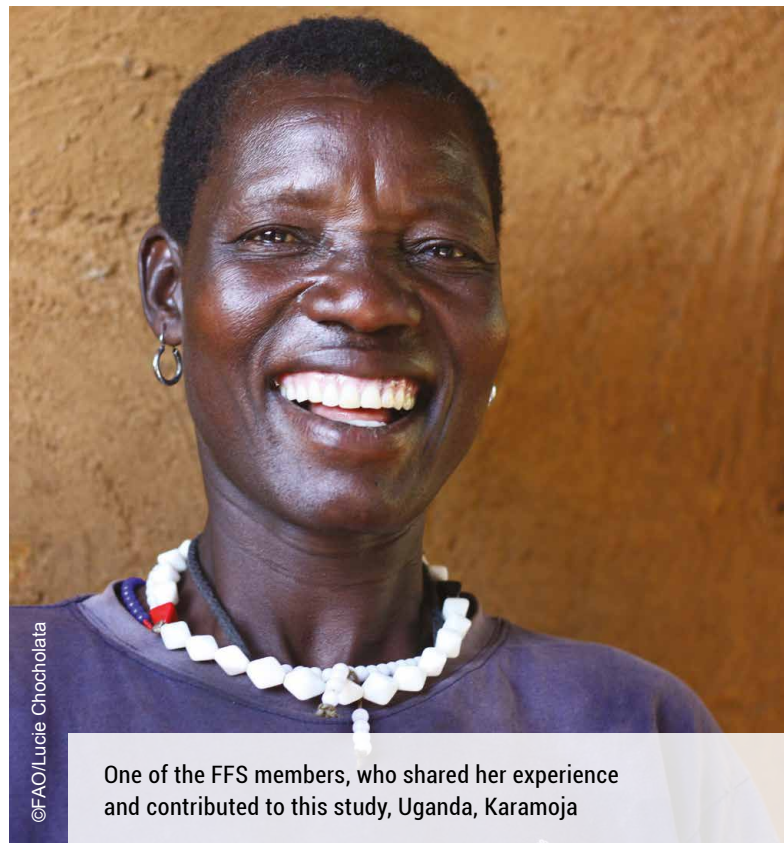
Despite the relatively limited timeframe and number of farmers interviewed, the reaction of participants and the information that has emerged from the discussions reveals a great deal of interest in the topics covered by the study and an openness to sharing their experiences. This was also the case with FFS/APFS practitioners.

Farmers participating in FFSs/APFSs acquire skills and knowledge that allow them to respond to change and make appropriate decisions within changing environments. The FFS/APFS approach is perceived by the farmers that participated in the exercise as an appropriate and useful way of improving analytical skills, developing new skills, learning more effectively, filling gaps in knowledge, responding to their needs and strengthening their capacity to make the appropriate, informed and knowledge-based decisions that allow them to solve problems together.

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The findings of the focus group discussions in Karamoja reveal that **the longer a group had been running, the more they stressed the social outcomes of their participation in the FFS/APFS programme.** The newer groups considered financial and technical knowledge in particular as being the most beneficial effects of the FFS/APFS on their lives. Older groups, where members continued working together and maintaining some of the activities they had in common, considered primarily social benefits to be the most significant, such as social cohesion, increased mutual trust, greater solidarity and mutual help, a decrease in conflicts (their prevention and peaceful solution), (information) sharing, improved relations at the household level and increased participation in decision-making. These groups tended to perceive financial aspects and technical knowledge as still important, but thought of them more as ordinary effects of their participation in the FFS programme (see Figure 5). The key aspects the FFS/APFS groups in Karamoja had in common, as previously mentioned, were the VSLs and the formalization of groups.

While the FFS/APFS approach was not primarily designed to address dynamics at the household and community level, it often impacts them in a very significant way. Empowerment/emancipation in a more general sense (in this text it is understood as an expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices within their households and their communities, particularly in contexts where this ability has been limited) (Kabeer, 2001) represents

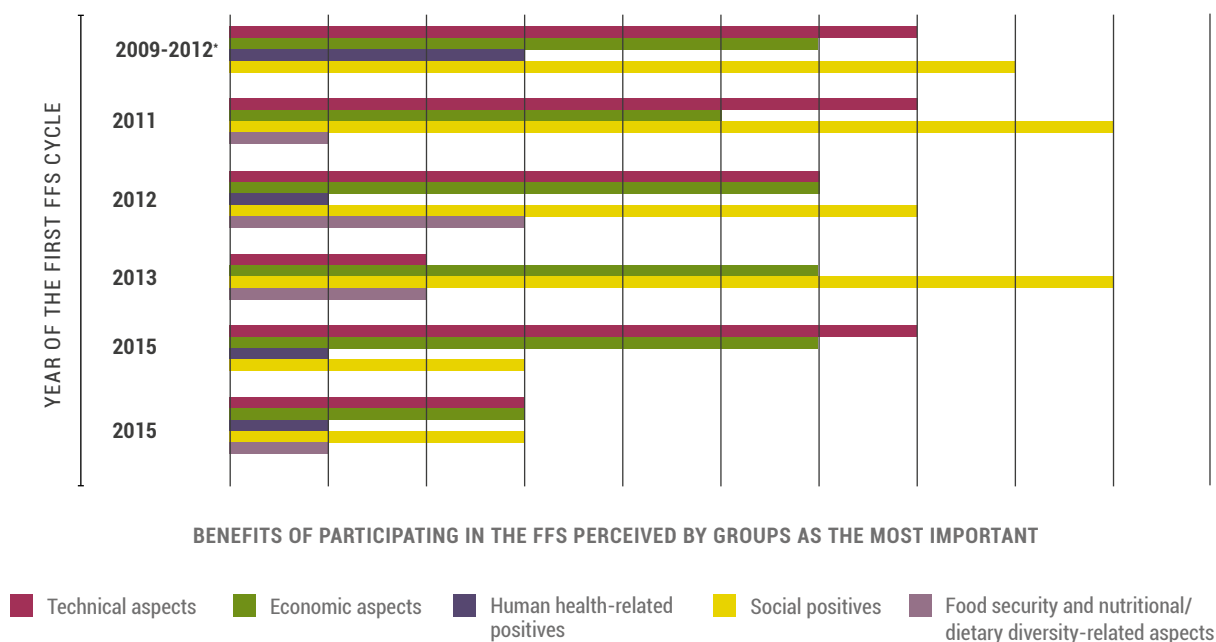


One of the FFS members, who shared her experience and contributed to this study, Uganda, Karamoja

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Figure 5 Groups' perception of the most important aspects in FFSs/APFSs

Six focus group discussions with 80 APFS graduates/participants (42 women, 38 men) in Uganda's Karamoja sub-region (districts of Nakapiripirit and Amudat)



* Focus group composed of members of four neighbouring APFS started between 2009 and 2012

one of the three key areas of learning (the other two being technical and practical matters) (FAO, 2016). Protracted crises, such as the one in Karamoja sub-region, have a significant impact on social capital, interactions, ties and connections, as well as values and trust at both the family and community levels (Avis, 2016). It is recognized that social capital, connections and ties improve trust, reinforce shared norms, increase information sharing, and influence attitudes and aspirations. Social connections therefore play a crucial role in risk mitigation and recovery processes.

Protracted crises, such as the one in Karamoja sub-region, have a significant impact on social capital, interactions, ties and connections, as well as values and trust at both the family and community levels.

The FFS/APFS approach and its core principles are thus extremely relevant, as they not only directly, but also and especially indirectly, address the issues damaged by the crisis. The following subchapters reflect the main thematic areas of the scoping exercise.

3.2.1 Farmers' experiences

3.2.1.1 Gender equality

It is evident that FFSs/APFSs have a beneficial effect not only on the technical skills and capacity of farmers and their informed and considered decision-making, but also to a significant extent on both the community as a whole and household dynamics. Many of the men farmers indicated that their FFS/APFS experience, which emphasized shared work and responsibilities, communication, listening, expression of opinions, respect for others' opinions, and joint decision-making based on observation and discussion, changed how they communicated with their families.

The following summarizes the main points related to gender equality that emerged from the focus group and individual discussions. Their order reflects the frequency and emphasis with which they were expressed:

- economic independence/empowerment of women, their financial contribution to household finances (shared financial contribution to family budget from partners, in some cases women become the only provider of household income);
- more respect and increased decision-making power;
- shared responsibilities and decision-making;
- listening, discussion, more open communication, respect for others' opinions;

- changes in attitudes, changing role models;
- FFS/APFS group dynamics influencing household dynamics;
- decrease in conflicts and GBV in APFS households;
- experience of working in a team (made up of women and men), improved mutual understanding;
- communication as a way of understanding the other's experience, seeing things from the point of view of the opposite sex;
- mutual understanding (and better comprehension of the gender issues) between partners (with partial changes in division of/responsibility for tasks at household level);
- greater fluidity in gender-related cultural codes, increased mobility within physical and symbolic spaces;
- the process of searching for new role models, changing traditional gender models of masculinity.

Except for one, all the groups visited were mixed (made up of both women and

FFSs/APFSs have a beneficial effect not only on the technical skills and capacity of farmers and their informed and considered decision-making, but also to a significant extent on both the community as a whole and household dynamics.

Most of the groups indicated that the change they saw in gender dynamics was significantly related to the increased cultural, and thus physical, mobility of women, and to greater fluidity in cultural codes relating to the use of physical space.

men), although members tended to be predominantly female. Most of the groups indicated that the change they saw in gender dynamics was significantly related to the **increased cultural, and thus physical, mobility of women, and to greater fluidity in cultural codes** relating to the use of physical space. “Before, women and men used to meet separately, and this was a potential source of conflicts because women talk badly about men and vice versa. Thanks to the APFS, we started meeting together. We have much more in common, we share many topics and there is mutual understanding. This doesn’t stop with our group; it also involves other community members. Through this interaction, we’ve discovered that everybody has good ideas” (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). Another graduate says: “The APFS strengthened the position of women in the community and broadened their possibilities. In the past, they were not allowed to talk at community meetings; they could only sit to one side. They used to be treated as children. In localities where there are APFS groups, the change is visible. They started to be respected and express themselves quite freely on such occasions. It is good to mention that many of the local

men are dependent on their wives’ income. Some of them work together, especially if they take part in the APFS group, but there are others that continue drinking alcohol and don’t help much” (male APFS graduate, Karamoja).

Given that traditional **manhood** in Karamoja (strongly associated with aspects such as status and prestige, respect from the community, and the ability to marry, which has traditionally been linked to wealth and ownership of cattle) (Avis, 2016) has been undergoing a crisis and is currently in search of **new role models**, FFSs/APFSs are facilitating this process by offering livelihood alternatives. This helps people to improve their living conditions, regain dignity, find a new place in society and provide less gender-specific role models. “I stopped drinking thanks to the APFS. I have much more self-awareness, and I realized that I was harming my family and I was pretty useless. I’ve even been known to sell goats and spend the money on alcohol. At the APFS, it became clear to me that I can’t do anything meaningful if I continue drinking. I gained the respect of

We have much more in common, we share many topics and there is mutual understanding. This doesn’t stop with our group; it also involves other community members. Through this interaction, we’ve discovered that everybody has good ideas.

Female APFS graduate, Karamoja

the community and became a community mobilizer. I'm able to secure enough income for my family. That makes me proud and it proves that my decision to stop drinking was right" (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). Another man graduate explains: "In our Pokot tradition, agriculture isn't perceived as something important, and especially, not as something for men to do. When we started, there were community members that mocked us. Today, it's them who come asking for a loan because we have cash. They may have cattle, but they don't have cash" (male APFS graduate, Karamoja).

The majority of the graduates reported that **household communication and dynamics changed after their APFS experience due**

to the improved way they communicated, expressed themselves clearly, discussed things and listened to others' opinion. One of the graduates described changes in his relationship with his wife: "We spend much more time together now, talking, planning, discussing things and making decisions together, for example what to sell or what to grow ... We also changed our eating habits: in contrast to the past, me and my wife are now sharing meals" (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). Most participants started being able to communicate more openly with their spouses and other family members, and to share more information, including work- or finance-related issues. In their opinion, this **improved mutual understanding and collaboration within their households.**

"We used to have a lot of conflicts, and each of us was making decisions on their own without regard for the other person. We had separate limited incomes without much sharing. Now, we make decisions on how to use resources together and, for example, if I don't have enough money for the weekly VSLs savings, my husband covers the amount. This is because of the availability, but also because we are much more unified now" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja).

Graduates reported that household communication and dynamics changed after their APFS experience due to the improved way they communicated, expressed themselves clearly, discussed things and listened to others' opinion.



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FFS participants generously shared their experiences including both personal and professional dimensions. FFS member, Uganda, Karamoja

Most FFS/APFS graduates in Karamoja reported that in contrast to the past, they now work together with their spouses in the field, or that they had started **helping each other** with their field work. According to them, this change had improved relations and the collaborative spirit at the household level. **“Before the APFS, it was the responsibility of the man to provide food for the family. If he didn’t, there was conflict. Now, we both bring home money and food – we share this responsibility. I think that this is the reason for the decrease in violence”** (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). Some of the male graduates mentioned that they had reconsidered their perception of women as a result of the FFS experience: **“In the past, I perceived women as useless beings. I only gave my wife orders. But at the APFS, I realized that women have a lot of really good ideas. This changed my point of view on both women in general and my wife. Nowadays I call her ‘mamma”** (male APFS graduate, Karamoja).

Another APFS participant says: **“I used to think of women as children that cannot help you with anything. Today I recognize their importance: they bring home money as men are supposed to do”** (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). A female graduate explains: **“I used to feel alone even within my own family. The APFS and increased sharing and communication affected everything, and it brought our family closer. My husband started sharing decisions with me, and I do the same with him”** (female APFS graduate, Karamoja).

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Male APFS graduate, Karamoja

All female graduates interviewed stated that they had gained **more respect and decision-making power** within the community and household environments, as well as in their agricultural work. They attribute this change to their improved knowledge and skills, which have enabled them to initiate, improve or diversify their agricultural or agriculture-related work, resulting in greater **financial independence**. These women reported that their partners perceive them as contributing more to the household’s management and finances. In some cases, female participants stated that they were exclusively or primarily responsible for securing the family income, and this fact increased their importance, respect and decision-making power within the household. The increased income generated by female FFS/APFS graduates creates a strong motivation for men to support women’s participation. What is more, some male participants also stated that they had gained more respect and control over their family following their involvement in the FFS/APSF: **“I didn’t have control over my family at all. Nobody was listening to me; I wasn’t able to secure my family’s basic**

needs. This has changed a lot: now I'm able to provide all that my family might need. I have their respect" (male APFS graduate, Karamoja).

There is a **gender division of labour**. Most of the production work is still carried out by women. Women are also generally exclusively responsible for household-related tasks, such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of children. According to farmers from households where either one of the partners or both took part in an FFS/APFS, there has been an **increase in mutual comprehension**, which has also partially impacted the gender division of labour. "In the past, my husband wasn't very participative. Most of the work was on my shoulders and he kept adding more and more tasks. Then we both joined the same APFS. We started working together in the field, and he is now even helping with kids" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). In the cases where **both the spouses attended the FFS/APFS**, the beneficial effects of this on gender dynamics seem to be considerably greater. "Women and men didn't use to work together. Moreover, cultivation

I used to feel alone even within my own family. The APFS and increased sharing and communication affected everything, and it brought our family closer. My husband started sharing decisions with me, and I do the same with him.

Female APFS graduate, Karamoja

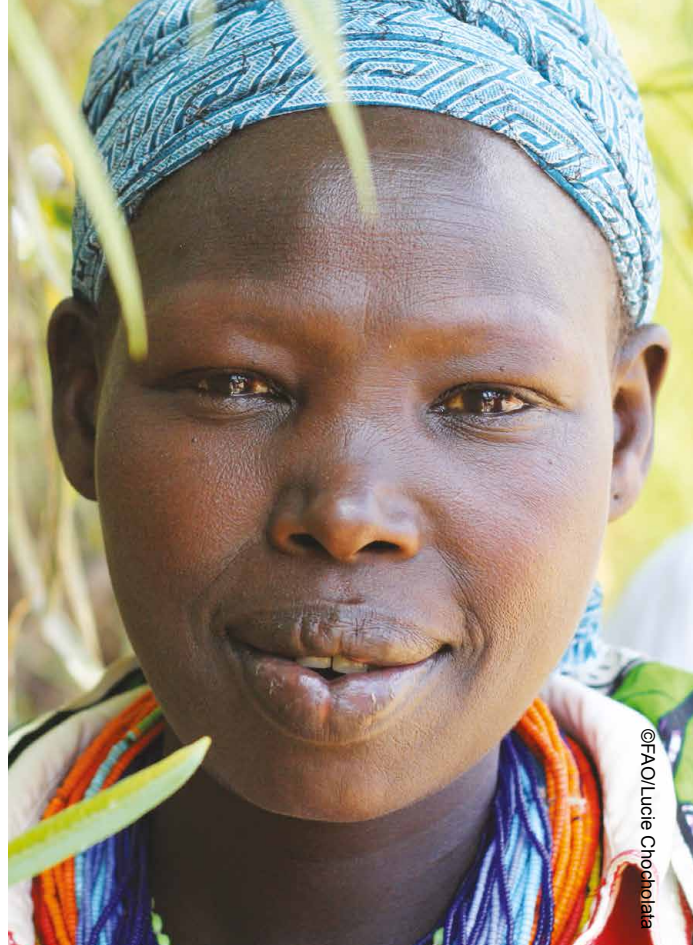
All female graduates interviewed stated that they had gained more respect and decision-making power within the community and household environments, as well as in their agricultural work.

was traditionally an activity for women. Nowadays we work in the field together, we make decisions together, we are able to find good solutions. I believe it's because of our commitment. We are so involved that we don't even have time to waste on things like drinking" (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). "I see that men who joined the APFS changed their attitudes. They now work together with their wives in the field. I think the reason is that at the APFS they learned to work in the field as a group, in equity, and without any distinction between female and male tasks" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja).

The issue of **gender-based violence** (GBV) clearly emerged from the interviews. Both men and women participants mentioned it, despite the fact that they were not explicitly questioned about it. When doing so, they were referring mostly to the past in order to explain how household dynamics had changed, and that there were now fewer or no occurrences of physical violence, including GBV, within domestic contexts. "I felt frustrated and was in difficulties because it was hard to secure a minimum income for my family. I tried to ask my friends for help, but it didn't work. This frustration was causing violence.

Yes, I was using violence at home” (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). Another male participant reported: “At the beginning, my position was that I would never obey a woman, any woman. When my wife said something I didn’t like, I just hit her. Actually, there was nothing specific at the APFS about relations between men and women. It was the principle of understanding and respect towards others that made me change” (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). They attribute this change mainly to improved communication and collaboration, changes in personal skills and the ability to use them, increased wealth allowing them to secure their basic needs, and improved living standards. “Since I started participating in our APFS, my relationship with my sons has improved. In the past, when I tried to force them to go to school, one of the older ones might give me a slap. That doesn’t happen anymore. They obey now; we discuss various life topics. I think the reason is that I’m successful, respected and able to secure resources for my whole family. And another aspect is that at the APFS I learned how to talk to others, how to influence them, how to best express and formulate what I want to say. I have to say that even outside the home they are less violent. Before, they were always having problems with other

In the cases where both the spouses attended the FFS/APFS, the beneficial effects of this on gender dynamics seem to be considerably greater.



According to farmers from households where either one of the partners or both took part in an FFS/APFS, there has been an increase in mutual comprehension.

I see there are less conflicts and cases of gender-based violence. I believe this stems from the fact that women and men now work together in the field – this came mostly from the APFS. Moreover, the example the APFS group gives has been generally adopted by other community members, in terms of both agricultural skills and the way of doing things and communicating.

Male APFS graduate, Karamoja

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Male APFS graduate, Karamoja



FFS usually brings together various age groups and strengthens the links/relations between generations

guys, and I was repeatedly obliged to pay for medical care for others after they were beaten by my sons” (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). Another participant explains: “I see there are less conflicts and cases of gender-based violence. I believe this stems from the fact that women and men now work together in the field – this came mostly from the APFS. Moreover, the example the APFS group gives has been generally adopted by other community members, in terms of both agricultural skills and the way of doing things and communicating” (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). Two of the female participants reported that they experienced violence from their husbands. In both cases, the husband was not involved either in the FFS/APFS group or in the woman’s agricultural work. Alcohol abuse¹¹ is widespread and seems to greatly contribute to the occurrence of violence/violent acts. However, in order to understand better actual changes in GBV incidence, a dedicated inquiry would be needed.

¹¹ “Destruction of social values (...) has a high degree of association with increased alcohol dependency and miss-use, violence, economic disempowerment, lack of self-esteem and cultural belief and increasing powerlessness and social lethargy. Protracted crises may also entail changes in livelihood, gendered roles and the notions of the legitimate use of violence.” (Avis, 2016)

3.2.1.2 Women's empowerment

Empowerment, at the individual level, means an improved and greater control over people's lives. This includes control over knowledge, financial resources, rights and assets, but at the same time it also refers to a sense of well-being and self-esteem/self-confidence.¹²

In Karamoja, most of the **FFS/APFS groups were mixed** (made up of both women and men). In contrast with some other countries, where a **critical mass** of women within a mixed group is needed in order for them to feel comfortable working with men, this culture-specific aspect was not a critical issue in Uganda. However, a balance of women and men in the groups (where possible and appropriate¹³) amplifies the positive impact of FFSs/APFSs on gender dynamics. Attention needs to be paid to the role which different group members play and also what are the overall dynamics within the group. Do the habitual gender roles dictate group dynamics? Do female members have equal opportunities to participate actively? And do they in fact participate actively? All these questions need to be carefully considered. The role of facilitators, and their ability and willingness to work with these thematic areas, is crucial.

According to the female farmers interviewed, participating in an FFS/APFS has been a very important experience for them. This is not only due to their improved

Empowerment, at the individual level, means an improved and greater control over people's lives. This includes control over knowledge, financial resources, rights and assets, but at the same time it also refers to a sense of well-being and self-esteem/self-confidence.

technical skills, increased self-confidence, more opportunities for networking, and the greater recognition they receive from the community, but also and especially due to the **financial impacts of empowerment**.

"My neighbours have changed their attitude towards me. They used to underestimate my abilities and I wasn't perceived as important at all. This changed. They see that I'm able to make a living by myself, that I can save money and I'm able to cover medical expenses if needed, and that I can make a commitment. They respect me now. For example, they come to ask me for advice or how they can take part in the APFS" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). Another APFS graduate says: **"People come to ask for advice on how to do this or that. They know I'm independent, I'm able to rely on myself and if needed, there is still our group to offer support to its members. You know, my opinion has started being seriously taken into account in our community. They pay attention to what I say now. This is a big difference compared with the past"** (female APFS graduate, Karamoja).

Disparities between women and men in rural areas of Karamoja are still influenced

¹² More on this and the links between empowerment and well-being in Friis-Hansen and Duveskog (2012).

¹³ Depending on the main subject (crop) of an FFS.



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A group meeting of one of the FFS in Karamoja

Attention needs to be paid to the role which different group members play and also what are the overall dynamics within the group.

primarily by the traditional male-led decision-making system, and in some cases this might be intensified by different levels of formal education, impacting women's capacity and self-confidence to express themselves freely and clearly, especially when in a group. According to the interviewees, the experience gained through the FFS/APFS motivated some of the female graduates to look for other opportunities to learn: "I changed my approach towards life (...) you can only learn new things from

others (...) I'm motivated to learn new things, to take an active approach to life and plan what else I can do" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). For women, an **improved or altered self-perception and self-confidence, and reimagination of their own role in agricultural activities** is crucial for change to occur. This is where empowerment starts, and the FFSs/APFSs have proven to be a very powerful approach. One of the graduates stated: "It wasn't anything specific, but the principles and functioning of the APFS made us change our attitudes. It opened our eyes, it inspired us" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). Another participant says: "I really feel part of the community now. Moreover, in the APFS, we got used to talking with men openly and without barriers" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja).

According to the female farmers interviewed, participating in an FFS/APFS has been a very important experience for them. This is not only due to their improved technical skills, increased self-confidence, more opportunities for networking, and the greater recognition they receive from the community, but also and especially due to the financial impacts of empowerment.

The following are the key points related to women's empowerment formulated by women farmers during the focus group and individual discussions. The order reflects the frequency and emphasis with which they were expressed:

- recognition and increased respect within the family and community
- increased self-confidence and self-esteem
- increased income (and decision-making power, decision-making over family income)
- formal rural organizations, informal support networks, VSLs, social funds
- knowledge, skills and experience gained
- information sharing
- role models – FFS/APFS female graduates as an inspiration for other women
- increased mobility within physical and symbolic spaces
- increased participation in community decision-making

All women interviewed reported that both their income and ability to make decisions on family income increased significantly. All FFSs/APFSs introduced or reinforced already existing **saving schemes (village savings and loan schemes, or VSLs)**. In some cases, these are co-managed exclusively by women. In addition to savings, these groups also offer microloans to their members. However, in most cases, such loans are also made available to the wider community if individuals are perceived by the group as trustworthy. At the same time, VSLs generate additional income for the group. VSLs were introduced to Karamoja as an integral part of the FFS/APFS programmes. In this local context, they have proven to be an extremely important aspect that enables smallholders, and particularly female smallholders, to access credit. A female participant says: **“We grow sunflowers, sesame seeds, groundnuts and cow peas. A part of what we produce is for home consumption, but the majority is sold. This increases my income and allows me to save money in the VSL. The savings have allowed me to access larger amounts of money through my own savings or through**

For women, an improved or altered self-perception and self-confidence, and reimagination of their own role in agricultural activities is crucial for change to occur. This is where empowerment starts, and the FFSs/APFSs have proven to be a very powerful approach.

loans. I've even started my own small business" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). For them, it is often their only possible **access to financial resources**. Moreover, VLS groups meet regularly and discuss various community-related topics: "We discuss a lot of things at the meetings (...) even if we are not able to read, through the VLS we've learned how to read and write numbers" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). In all cases, formal organizations were set up again as part of the FFS/APFS programme. In Karamoja, VLSs are commonly used to ensure the food security of FFS/APFS households. "Last season's harvest wasn't good, but we had our savings in the VLS and goats we had previously bought thanks to our increased income in recent years. So we managed to have enough food" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja).

It has been confirmed through the discussions and interviews that **female FFS/APFS graduates and their activities attract the attention of other women**. They become a source of inspiration, co-creating **new role models**, and therefore might play an important role in motivating other women to join. "Others are coming and asking me how to do things; they want to become like me" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja).

It has been confirmed through the discussions and interviews that female FFS/APFS graduates and their activities attract the attention of other women.

The FFSs/APFSs in combination with their integrated VLS component have strengthened relations and allowed participants to create or strengthen informal support networks.

A key informant and FFS/APFS practitioner explained: "When we started working in this locality in 2010, one of the most difficult issues we faced when involving women was the impossibility of getting them to speak out loud, to express themselves when in a group. The APFS helped considerably to change this."

The FFSs/APFSs in combination with their integrated VLS component have strengthened relations and allowed participants to create or strengthen informal **support networks**: "When somebody doesn't come to the meeting or to the field, we go to that person's home to ask what is happening" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). "We have a social fund which is basically used in case of emergencies. But I know that if I'm in difficulties, the group will support me" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). This support through informal networks is expressed in various ways: "Relations with other women from our APFS are really strong; we care of each other. For example, when there are hard tasks to be done in the field, we go and do the work together. Or when somebody is travelling, somebody from the group takes care of the children" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja).

3.2.1.3 Social inclusions

Social inclusion is both the process and the outcome of improving the terms by which people participate in society. It concerns the dignity of people who have been disadvantaged as a result of their identity, and is about improving their ability and opportunity to fully take part in society and about making them feel valued and important. It might also include the provision of rights and enabling factors to individuals and groups so that all people have a voice in the decision-making processes that influence their lives, or else access to services and political, social and physical spaces.¹⁴ Initiatives and activities promoting social inclusion thus help individuals and communities who have been socially excluded to overcome the condition of inequality and disadvantages. They promote equality of opportunities and diversity, and aim to eliminate discrimination.

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¹⁴ Social exclusion on the other hand is generally described as a situation where individuals or groups do not receive recognition from or have no voice in the society in which they live. Such a phenomenon may arise as a result of multiple and interconnected factors.

FFSs/APFSs are, at least in part, socially inclusive by definition due to their focus on small farmers who are often among the most vulnerable within societies and within the context of agriculture. But even within the context of rural communities and small-holders, social inclusion/exclusion needs to be carefully considered, analysed and adapted to the relevant setting of an FFS/APFS.

FFSs/APFSs are, at least in part, socially inclusive by definition due to their focus on small farmers who are often among the most vulnerable within societies and within the context of agriculture. But even within the context of rural communities and small-holders, social inclusion/exclusion needs to be carefully considered, analysed and adapted to the relevant setting of an FFS/APFS. The categories to be taken into consideration when focusing on social vulnerabilities are, for example, sex, ethnicity, nationality, age, health, family status, membership of a particular social group, and poverty. “We used to exchange ideas and collaborate mostly within our ethnic group (Pokot). During and after the APFS, we started having much more collaboration and shared work with other ethnic groups” (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). Another graduate, a woman with a physical handicap, described her experience: “Thanks to participating in the APFS group, I’ve gained respect from other community members. many people



One of the benefits of the FFS is that families have more resources for education purposes for their children

used to be call out to me, 'Hey, disabled!' This doesn't happen anymore. Everybody calls me 'sister' or 'madam'; I'm really happy. Moreover, various neighbours have come to see me for advice, and not only in relation to agriculture" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). A male graduate who also had a physical handicap reported: "If I hadn't joined the APFS, I would probably have remained unmarried, partially due to my handicap and partially because of my economic status. Now I'm happily married and even my wife has joined an APFS group. Once, while I was away to attend a course for tailors because I wanted to start a new activity, my wife saved money she

Special attention therefore needs to be paid to the sensitive selection criteria used to choose participants and factors influencing inclusiveness throughout the implementation process.

had earned from her agricultural work and surprised me with a sewing machine she had bought for me. This is to say that many things have changed in our lives" (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). Some factors, on the other hand, may limit the inclusiveness of programmes. In cases where one of the

preconditions of participation in the FFS/APFS is that the participant be a decision-maker in relation to land or an agricultural activity, this might be especially limiting for many women who are nevertheless playing an important role within the context of family farms. Special attention therefore needs to be paid to the sensitive selection criteria used to choose participants and factors influencing inclusiveness throughout the implementation process.

While introducing the FFSs/APFSs to Karamoja, partner organizations active in the thematic areas covered were involved in the process. **Information was disseminated to farmers primarily either through these organizations, the village authorities or the church, or else with their assistance.** A number of graduates reported having **received information about the FFS/APFS or the suggestion to join from other farmers.** Some of the groups indicated that they had actively searched for the opportunity to participate in an FFS/APFS or set up their own group due to the fact that other existing groups in their locality had inspired them. **“Close to us, there was already another APFS group. We wanted to be like them, so we searched for information on how to have our own APFS”** (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). The FFS/APFS implementation process in Karamoja therefore made use of **diverse and capillary channels to reach the target group** (village authorities and meetings, direct contact, etc.).

Another important aspect to be carefully considered is that group membership may

In cases where the facilitator was more aware of and sensitive to social vulnerability issues and prepared to work with them, the dynamics of interactions among its members reflected this.

not necessarily reflect active participation/ an active role within a group, and it is therefore not the quantity but the **quality of group membership**, which needs to be carefully analysed and taken into consideration when setting up FFSs/APFSs. For instance, women in agriculture often face more constraints related to access to knowledge, land and land ownership, capital, credit, markets, extension services¹⁵ and production assets, and they are often forced to contend with multiple workloads, limited mobility and wage disparities compared with men. Quality FFS/APFS programmes encourage all FFS members to play an active role and promote their active participation, as well as inclusive decision-making. The findings of this exercise demonstrate that in cases **where the facilitator was more aware of and sensitive to social vulnerability issues and prepared to work with them, the dynamics of interactions among its members reflected this.**

¹⁵ Although the situation differs from country to country, it is evident that women involved in agriculture face more barriers that affect their access to extension services. According to GFRAS (2012), only 15% of extension agents worldwide are women, and only 5% of women farmers benefit from extension services.

Furthermore, based on the group discussions and individual interviews, it can be concluded that improved communication, the capacity to listen better to others' opinions, **acknowledgment of the importance of understanding others' reasons, and the ability to calmly express one's own opinions** have significantly improved mutual comprehension not only within FFS/APFS groups but also, according to FFS/APFS farmers, outside these groups within the wider community. This has allowed the creation of **socially more fluid and inclusive environments** at the community level. "What I learnt in APFS is that, if you want to be successful, you need to communicate and collaborate with others" (male APFS graduate, Karamoja).

Changes in attitudes and role models in the communities have been shown to have been significantly driven by the FFSs/APFSs: "Thanks to the APFS, I realized

Improved communication, the capacity to listen better to others' opinions, acknowledgment of the importance of understanding others' reasons, and the ability to calmly express one's own opinions have significantly improved mutual comprehension not only within FFS/APFS groups but also, according to FFS/APFS farmers, outside these groups within the wider community. This has allowed the creation of socially more fluid and inclusive environments at the community level.

APFS groups are generally much more open to new things, new technologies, and the rest of the community tend to adopt their practices and follow their example.

Male APFS practitioner and project manager, Karamoja.

that the only way a family can develop is through shared decisions. You need to make decisions together." The same participant also explains that at the beginning, some community members were opposed to certain changes and the introduction of new approaches: "this was solved with time. They saw that doing things differently works, so they started imitating it in the field and in the family" (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). Interviews with key informants and FFS/APFS practitioners from one of the programme's partner organizations showed that **FSS/APFS graduates often become resource persons** for the implementation of other programmes. "APFS groups are generally much more open to new things, new technologies, and the rest of the community tend to adopt their practices and follow their example" (male APFS practitioner and project manager, Karamoja). According to the key informants, aside from the fact that they know the social context of the localities very well, the reason for this is that the graduates developed organizational and especially communication skills, and are widely perceived by the communities as reliable, respectful, skilled and successful. The regard people have for them enables

The crucial role that the preparedness and integrity of facilitators, and their sympathetic and ethical qualities, play when dealing with group dynamics, special topics and the implementation process itself.

them to intervene even in socially complex situations. This indicates an **increase in human and social capital among FFS/APFS graduates**. That being said, it is necessary to complete the picture by mentioning that a significant number of graduates reported they are being approached by politicians with offers to campaign for them. While this again confirms that graduates have become role models within their communities, it might also represent a potential pitfall. At the same time, it is worth pointing out the **crucial role that the preparedness and integrity of facilitators, and their sympathetic and ethical qualities, play when dealing with group dynamics, special topics and the implementation process itself**.

The concept of **social capital** draws attention to **social connections and ties** within a society and the interpersonal resources used to establish and cultivate them.¹⁶ It is thus commonly used to describe the **value of these connections within and among more or less institutionalized social networks, value of social trust facilitating**

¹⁶ Bourdieu, 1992 (although Bourdieu used the concept of social capital to describe social exclusion phenomena); Avis, 2016

Acknowledging the crucial role FFSs/APFSs play in empowering people and communities, it would be useful to explore how to make them more socially inclusive and more accessible for socially vulnerable individuals and groups within specific local contexts, and how to allow these people to benefit from participation.

cooperation for mutual benefit. (Putnam, 1995) Among other things, it facilitates **information flow and the resolution of common problems**, (Brehm and Rahn, 1997) **and enables collective action**, which could be one of the indicators of increased social capital. As with other thematic areas, this area has its own gender dimension which cannot be ignored.

Acknowledging the crucial role FFSs/APFSs play in empowering people and communities, it would be useful to explore how to make them more socially inclusive and more accessible for socially vulnerable individuals and groups¹⁷ within specific local contexts, and how to allow these people to benefit from participation.

¹⁷ The make-up of groups categorized as vulnerable is extremely heterogeneous, and their characteristics depend on numerous factors such as culture, regional context, economic dynamics and the work of their members. All this changes over time. Within this context, the term is used with an awareness of what mentioned, and as a strategic category that allows appropriate action to be fixed on, with the ultimate goal being to improve the quality of life of these people and groups.



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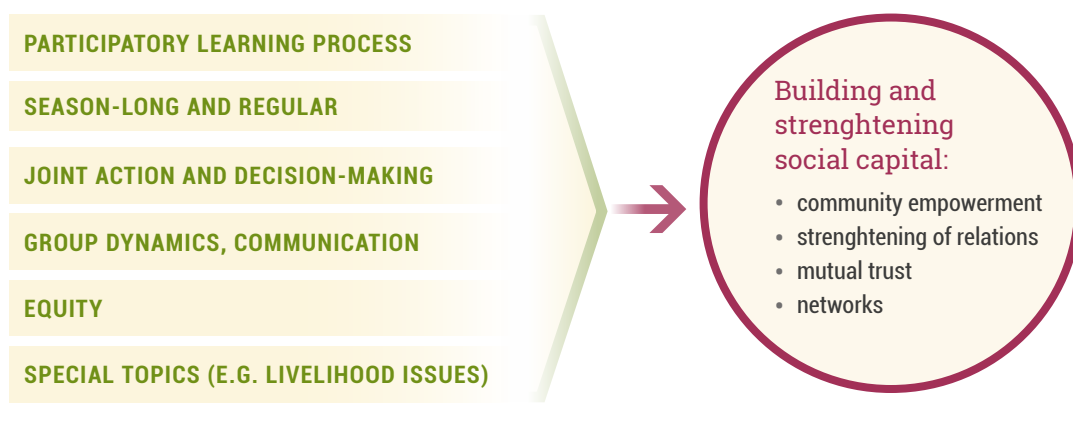
All female graduates interviewed stated that they had gained more respect and decisionmaking power within the community and household environments, as well as in their agricultural work.

3.2.1.4 Community empowerment, social cohesion

Empowerment at the community level means that people are gaining more control over their lives and are becoming active agents of their own development. (Friis-Hansen and Duveskog, 2012) It is closely related to community ownership of this process. Some of the key characteristics of the FFSs/APFSs, such as the participatory learning process, season-long meetings and working together, communication, discussion and joint decision-making, the principle of equity, and incorporation of special topics into the curricula, are essential for enabling the **empowerment of communities** (see Figure 6). The participatory nature of the FFSs/APFSs influences social dynamics, **strengthens relations**, helps build **mutual trust** within the community, and promotes **joint problem-solving**. FFS/APFS groups are **perceived by the wider community as reliable and trustworthy**; they are often asked by other community members or bodies to disseminate community-wide information unrelated to agriculture. **“We are respected now and perceived as knowledgeable, as people who live a good life and have ethical**

Empowerment at the community level means that people are gaining more control over their lives and are becoming active agents of their own development. It is closely related to community ownership of this process.

Figure 6 FFS characteristics enabling community empowerment



principles. The community puts their trust in us and give us the role of community representatives. For example, I was elected a youth representative of in our locality” (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). In many cases, FFS groups thus represent an **additional unifying element in the community**.

FFS/APFS graduates spoke of changes in the everyday life of the community, in the relations among its member that resulted from their participation in the FFS/APFS, and also in the relations built

FFS/APFS groups are perceived by the wider community as reliable and trustworthy; they are often asked by other community members or bodies to disseminate community-wide information unrelated to agriculture.

or reinforced through it. Most of the graduates indicated that **communication, and as a result, community relations, social cohesion and solidarity** significantly increased. “If a member doesn't show up at the meeting, others go to his/her home to see what happened” (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). Another graduate gives an example: “If I have a problem, if I'm sick for example, other group members come and help me with my field work” (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). An FFS/APFS practitioner confirms this: “Where APFSs were introduced, cohesion within the communities became much stronger, much more pronounced. Furthermore, those not involved directly in the APFS see that it is beneficial to work together with others, with the involvement of both women and men. Thus, the community has also changed thanks to this example” (male APFS practitioner and project manager, Karamoja).

Most of the graduates indicated that communication, and as a result, community relations, social cohesion and solidarity significantly increased: “If a member doesn’t show up at the meeting, others go to his/her home to see what happened”, said one of the female APFS graduate in Karamoja.

All groups who participated in this study developed **village savings and loan schemes (VSLs)**, as discussed previously, as well as **social funds** (or emergency cash boxes) from which resources can be released in the event that a group member needs to cover expenses related to an unexpected life situation (most frequently in relation to health, social or education expenses that he or she could not afford to cover at that time). Either the amount is paid out in the form of a non-interest loan, or an interest rate is applied, even if it is lower than in case of loans coming from the VSLs. One of the groups stated that in some cases, the group may decide to allocate resources under a non-reimbursable expense scheme. Some graduates reported that in case of emergency, extra money for a member in need are collected *ad hoc* from among group members or offered individually to this person.

“We have a social fund which is basically used in case of emergencies. But I know that if I’m in difficulties, the group will support me” (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). This represents a joint community/group response to community members’ needs and issues. Varying degrees and forms of reinforcement

of community **safety net mechanisms** can be observed in all the groups interviewed.

As anticipated, **access to land** is an issue for women in particular. Most indicated that they worked on their husbands’ or APFS group land. **“Currently we are working on my husband’s land, which was given to me to use”** (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). Another graduate explains she and other group members worked together to solve the problem of access to land: **“At the beginning, we used to rent a field. With the income we had from vegetable growing, we managed to buy that land, so we are on our own”** (female APFS graduate, Karamoja).

The groups stated that their capacity to self-organize themselves at the community level, including in relation to non-agricultural topics, had increased. All the groups were continuing to work together in agricultural matters, but their activities very often went much further than this. **“In case a member needs to solve something involving the police, we go together, because in that way they are obliged to act. If you are alone nothing might happen”** (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). FFSs/APFSs have played a crucial role in **both strengthening, and in particular creating, formal and informal rural organizations**. According to the interviewees,

We have a social fund which is basically used in case of emergencies. But I know that if I’m in difficulties, the group will support me.

Female APFS graduate, Karamoja

The groups stated that their capacity to self-organize themselves at the community level, including in relation to non-agricultural topics, had increased.

participation in the FFS/APFS had built mutual trust, reinforced community cohesion and inspired its members in terms of how to organize themselves. This fact had facilitated the establishment of new rural organizations and the strengthening of existing connections and networks.

The following are the key concepts and comments related to community empowerment expressed by the FFS graduates during the individual and focus group discussions. The order reflects the frequency and emphasis with which they were articulated:

- improved position in society (as both an individual and a group), how the society perceives me now;
- collaboration, working together, helping each other (especially in their agricultural work);
- access to credit, improved capacity for financial planning (VSLs);
- expansion of contacts for personal and professional purposes (intra-community and inter-community relations and collaboration);
- mutual trust;
- own mechanisms and strategies for coping with/overcoming difficulties, and

formal, semi-formal and informal safety nets (support of vulnerable community members and families, VSLs);

- conflict mediation, conflict resolution at community level (e.g. access to land, land use);
- building of community, community spirit, social cohesion;
- listening, dynamic discussion, more open communication, respect for others' opinions, joint decision-making (influencing environment within families);
- sharing of technical information/skills (network, many of the graduates are providing information/technical assistance to other non-FFS/APFS farmers, non-FFS/APFS farmers imitating FFS/APFS practices once they see the results);
- general information sharing (FFS/APFS groups perceived by larger community as reliable and trustworthy, requests from community members and organizations to disseminate community-wide information);
- joint activities, collective action (beyond agricultural work, non-professional problem solving, social events);
- formal and informal rural organizations (various degrees of collaboration).

FFSs/APFSs have played a crucial role in both strengthening, and in particular creating, formal and informal rural organizations.

FFSs/APFSs are perceived by the farmers as a relevant and useful way of learning, filling in the gaps in their knowledge, responding to their needs and making the right decisions in order to jointly solve a wide range of issues related to more than just agriculture. **“I have only three years of elementary school, so the APFS has allowed me to complete my education, to fill in the gaps. I’ve learned so many things. I’m even able to pass the knowledge on to other non-APFS neighbours”** (male APFS graduate, Karamoja).

The issue of conflicts in the community and within the household environment has existed in Karamoja for a long time. Most of the graduates reported a **decrease in conflicts**. FFS/APFS farmers explained how improved living conditions and hopes for a better future, as well as the knowledge gained and improved communication and collaboration within the community, had helped with mutual comprehension. Their capacity to prevent conflicts and solve them (either individually or together) peacefully increased. This was one of the most frequent comments made by the FFS/APFS graduates interviewed.

FFSs/APFSs are perceived by the farmers as a relevant and useful way of learning, filling in the gaps in their knowledge, responding to their needs and making the right decisions in order to jointly solve a wide range of issues related to more than just agriculture.

FFS/APFS farmers explained how improved living conditions and hopes for a better future, as well as the knowledge gained and improved communication and collaboration within the community, had helped with mutual comprehension.

A number of graduates mentioned the effect the FFS/APFS learning process had had on their **perception of education**. In contrast to the findings of some previous studies conducted between 2007 and 2009 (e.g. Stites *et al.*, 2007) which, among other things, looked at education, and reported a generally low interest among communities in both formal and informal education, this exercise paints a slightly different picture. Many of the interviewees expressed how important they think the education of their children is, and indicated that they were attending school. Some of the young people had left the villages to enrol in high school, and in one case at university. **“Education is so important. My kids want to study, so they study. When you are educated, you always find a job. Before I go, all my children have to complete their studies”** (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). Given that interviews were carried out exclusively with APFS members, the question remains whether this effect can be seen as a change facilitated by the APFS (thanks to APFS members’ recognition of the usefulness of the improved knowledge and skills that increased their capacities to diversify and improve their livelihood strategies).

Many of the interviewees expressed how important they think the education of their children is, and indicated that they were attending school.



One of the amazing FFS fields in Karamoja

3.2.1.5 Sustainable agricultural production, food security, nutrition-related decision-making, health

Bearing in mind that the issue of IPPM was not the main focus of this exercise, there was little evidence from the discussions of farmers using pesticides in cultivation. To some extent, the APFS members who owned cattle reported pesticide use. In one case, a woman indicated that the pesticide spraying of livestock was her responsibility within household. The APFSs introduced or increased the use of botanical pest controls in relation to livestock, for example the use of neem extracts.

FFS/APFS graduates stressed that the knowledge and skills they had developed through the **FFSs/APFSs had had a significant impact on their agricultural production as a whole**, and not only the crop that was the main subject of the FFS/APFS they participated in. All interviewees indicated that they are applying the approaches and practices they learnt during the FFSs/APFSs in their fields. All farmers also reported that they had **diversified crops and increased the area they were cultivating** as a direct or indirect consequence of the knowledge,

All farmers also reported that they had diversified crops and increased the area they were cultivating as a direct or indirect consequence of the knowledge, improved skills, inspiration and greater availability of financial resources to come from the FFS/APFS.

improved skills, inspiration and greater availability of financial resources to come from the FFS/APFS.

Almost all farmers confirmed that the **knowledge gained through the FFS/APFS naturally spreads to non-FFS/APFS farmers**. Most of the graduates share this new information with other farmers on an ad hoc basis to solve specific problems, and few of

them follow the progress of these farmers over the longer term. Moreover, it seems that in Karamoja, advising other non-FFS/APFS farmers has further accentuated the multidimensional aspect that enters into broader life strategies. The graduates gain recognition from other community members and are becoming opinion-makers. Some of the graduates say:

Some of my neighbours created their own gardens following my example. They come to ask me for advice (...) for example, when there are conflicts between neighbours.

Male APFS graduate, Karamoja

The APFS experience has made most of its members well known in the community. People tend to involve us in all kinds of activities. For example, there are community meetings where pressing topics might be tackled as part of the discussion, and from time to time the community authorities invite us as a group to express our point of view on topics such as violence in the home. As a group and as individuals we have become important. People are interested in our ideas, proposals and activities. I think we inspire people.

Male APFS graduate, Karamoja

They come to ask for advice on how to do this or that. They know I'm independent, I'm able to rely on myself, and if needed, there is still our group to offer support to its members. You know, my opinion has started being seriously taken into account in our community. They pay attention to what I say. This is a big difference compared with the past.

Female APFS graduate, Karamoja

My neighbours have changed their attitude towards me. They used to underestimate my abilities and I wasn't perceived as important at all. This changed. They see that I'm able to make a living by myself, that I can save money and I'm able to cover medical expenses if needed, and that I can make a commitment. They respect me now. For example, they come to ask me for advice or how they can take part in the APFS.

Female APFS graduate, Karamoja

It seems that in Karamoja, advising other non-FFS/APFS farmers has further accentuated the multidimensional aspect that enters into broader life strategies. The graduates gain recognition from other community members and are becoming opinion-makers.

The FFS/APFS approach continues to have significant potential where **nutrition** is concerned. However, specific modules or sessions (special topics) need to be incorporated into FFS programmes to make use of this potential, and they should not be limited to a female audience. Furthermore, it was evident that in those groups where nutrition was dealt with explicitly, and introduced as part of the curriculum or a special topic scheme, awareness increased significantly among both women and men.

In all the areas visited, graduates reported significant changes in their diets thanks to the FFSs/APFSs, which had improved farmers' skills, knowledge and collaboration at the household level. The **quantity and variety of food** increased significantly as a result of both their own **diversified production and increased income**. "Thanks to the APFS, we learnt a lot about nutritional aspects, and this knowledge, together with the availability of food, has changed what we eat at home. Before it was basically quantity we cared about; now it's quality. We've realized how important a varied diet is for the human body" (female APFS graduate, Karamoja). Another graduate reports: "Our family diet changed thanks to our own production as well as increased income. In the past, apart from at festivities, we used to just consume basically cereals and some wild greens throughout the year" (male APFS graduate, Karamoja).

Figure 7 Main findings (basic elements)

-
- ➔ **Community empowerment**, joint action far beyond agricultural activities, trust, collaboration, mutual help, own safety nets, VSLs
 - ➔ **Dialogue, discussion, listening, respect for others, sharing** – within the community, group, household
 - ➔ **Change in gender dynamics** – more comprehension, more communication, sharing, joint decision-making, reported decrease in GBV in members' households
 - ➔ **Women's empowerment** – a significant factor is financial empowerment, knowledge, respect
 - ➔ Information spreads naturally to non-members, crop diversification, increased food security and dietary diversification
 - ➔ FFSs/APFSs directly impact human, social and financial capital
-

The following are the key aspects related to sustainable agricultural production, nutrition-related decision-making and health that emerged from the focus group and individual discussions:

- sustainable management of natural resources, local heritage and environmental conservation, introduction or increased use of botanical pesticides on livestock;
- knowledge-based and joint decision-making;
- information sharing, information spreads naturally to non-FFS/APFS farmers;
- households' improved food security (through own production and available funds, cereal banking);
- dietary diversification (through production diversification, increased income, knowledge);
- improved health (food security, diversified diet and access to medical services as a consequence of increased income, birth control);
- agro-ecosystem analysis;
- crop diversification.

The quantity and variety of food increased significantly as a result of both their own diversified production and increased income.



An FFS member presenting results of the group work, Uganda, Karamoja

3.2.2 FFS/APFS facilitators, master trainers and other APFS/FFS practitioners¹⁸

Given the transforming extension services system in Uganda, the context in which the FFS/APFS programme was introduced was different compared to that of other countries in which this exercise had previously been carried out (Jordan and Tunisia), where existing public agricultural extension systems were the key (and almost exclusive) partners, and it was primarily their network of technical staff that were involved as facilitators. In Karamoja, various implementing partners were involved in the implementation of the FFS/APFS programmes.

The challenges faced in both contexts differ in some respects. In the first model (used in Jordan and Tunisia), there may be difficulties associated with the usual top-down approaches to working under the paradigm of technology transfer of the traditional extension services. However, these structures often have specialized human resources that they can draw on relatively readily, and most importantly, they enjoy a certain continuity. The other model (used in Uganda), in which multiple actors mostly anchor their activity in sequences of project implementations (thus, not exclusively related to the FFSs/APFSs), may produce a number of quality facilitators hired for a

certain period of project implementation. When the project has ended, there are three possible scenarios for these practitioners: they are absorbed by other organizations, they adapt their profile to the available opportunities within the same sector, or they leave the sector. This may be considered a challenge in contexts where an effort is being made to build a strong **national FFS/APFS practitioner network**.

Moreover, various facilitators in Uganda expressed their uncertainty when approaching certain topics, such as gender equality, women's empowerment and vulnerability. Facilitators confirmed that **many social issues emerge during the learning cycle**. "Such topics always arise even if they are not specifically scheduled as part of the curriculum or under the "special topic scheme" (female APFS facilitator, Karamoja). "A facilitator needs to know how to work with, respond to and deal with such topics. Not everybody, regardless of their level of education, is able or willing to handle these issues, but certainly facilitators with lower levels of formal education who didn't receive any special training on these issues are likely to offer resistance to raising such topics" (female APFS facilitator, Karamoja).

Facilitators confirmed that many social issues emerge during the learning cycle: "Such topics always arise even if they are not specifically scheduled as part of the curriculum or under the "special topic scheme" said a female APFS facilitator in Karamoja.

¹⁸ E.g. project/programme staff focusing on the FFSs/APFSs.

Another facilitator says: “Women often have to deal with a heavy workload. I would say that most of the productive work is done by women and men tend to be very demanding: they expect the work to be done. Thus, both women and men need to be involved in the process of change. **Special training, supporting educational materials (possibly visual)** would be very helpful. Also, refresher training sessions are important and might be a good opportunity to reinforce this type of **knowledge**” (male APFS facilitator, Karamoja). Without special training and/or is related personal reflection on gender roles and inequalities, facilitators may even conform, whether consciously or not, to the existing gender system, and thus decrease the APFSs’ potential to play a role in improving gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Training on this is seen as crucial by FFS/APFS facilitators in order to build the necessary **capacity** to carry out this work. It is more likely that facilitators who do not go through an appropriate training process will not be able or willing to raise potentially problematic questions. Some of the community’s social (and specifically, gender)

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Male APFS facilitator, Karamoja

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dynamics may therefore be reproduced within FFS/APFS groups. This may limit the APFSs’ potential to strengthen gender equality, women’s empowerment, social inclusion and community empowerment. “We would very much appreciate special training, because when a concept is not clear, it can be easily skipped by the facilitator” (male APFS practitioner, Karamoja).

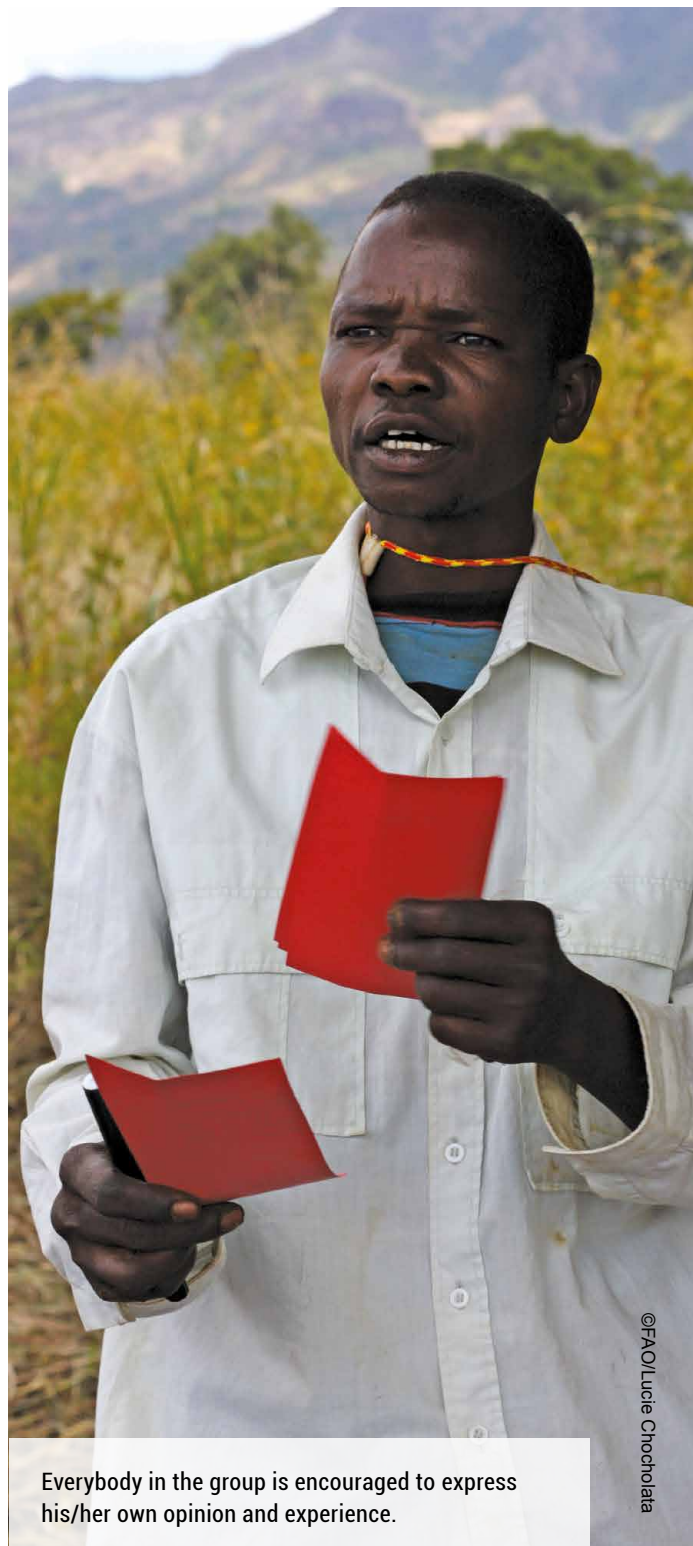
Enough time and room need to be found in the project/programme implementation process for the **preparatory phase** and baseline study, in which not only technical challenges and opportunities, but also social ones, should be reflected on, and the targeting criteria adapted to suit the local context.

FFS/APFS facilitators and other practitioners in Karamoja also confirmed that they are aware of the often very significant impact of this approach on social dynamics. Nevertheless, some of them were surprised by the magnitude of the changes to emerge from the farmers’ stories collected during this exercise. The reasons for not collecting and **reporting** this information might be the following: firstly, this is not

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usually required by the programme's formal reporting mechanism; secondly, these aspects could be perceived as the collateral impact of the FFSs, and thus not very relevant for reporting; and thirdly, collecting such information could be time-consuming and require the use of more specific tools. FFS/APFS practitioners recognize the need for further exploration and monitoring of these aspects, as they can contribute to the efforts focusing on high standard basis of quality FFS/APFS programme.

When discussing with FFS/APFS facilitators, master trainers and other practitioners the social aspects of FFSs/APFSs and their impact at the social and community levels, it seems evident that most of the currently used **monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and impact assessment mechanisms** do not record individual- and community-level changes that are not strictly linked to the FFS/APFS's technical component and its economic implications (unless a programme has specific social objectives). This unfortunately means that various very important aspects, such as changes in gender dynamics, social inclusiveness



Everybody in the group is encouraged to express his/her own opinion and experience.

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Farmers often mentioned that they were still in **contact with facilitators even after the programme had formally ended**. Some of the facilitators continue to visit their APFS graduates from time to time. One of the graduates said: **"It's not typical that those responsible for implementation of an external development activity remain in contact and are interested in how we are doing. Facilitators are important and their presence and interest give us hope. We feel supported"** (male APFS graduate, Karamoja). Over the longer term, thanks to the complex, informal and participative learning process, it is more likely for relations to be built and strengthened not

only among APFS participants but also between the facilitator and participants. This was confirmed in the interviews with facilitators: **"It is very nice to take care of a group (...) and a change in a community is visible usually after a certain time"** (male APFS facilitator, Karamoja).

One of the final considerations emerging from numerous discussions with FFS and APFS practitioners in the countries where this exercise was conducted is the importance of **focus on the process**, on how and in what environment and context different aspects become a reality, bearing in mind that the final product is highly dependent on and is a result of this process. Furthermore, while focusing on the technical content, as well as any other topics that might be of interest to participants, is certainly important, there needs to be a strong enough human **"bearing structure"** which is able to facilitate the process, work with such content and adapt it to specific local contexts.

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3.2.3 Challenges

- How can the FFS/APFS' potential be better used to strengthen gender equality, women's empowerment, social inclusion and community empowerment? How can FFS/APFS programmes and the FFSs/APFSs themselves be made more inclusive? How can social vulnerabilities and the specific needs of rural communities be better addressed, taking into account context- and culture-specific aspects? What do FFS/APFS practitioners need in order to better work with these aspects and feel more comfortable when doing so? What are the project-/programme-related implications (design, implementation, M&E/MEL/impact assessment)? These are the questions that should be reflected on and possibly answered in order to boost the FFS/APFS programme or project's potential to produce positive change at the individual and community levels in terms of gender equality, women's empowerment, social inclusion and community empowerment.
 - Female participants often had to contend with the problem of heavy workloads that might impede their regular participation. Some of them mentioned that at the beginning, they experienced attempts on their husband's part to prevent them from participating or make it difficult for them to participate. This seems to have occurred less or not at all when husbands were also involved in the programme, or in a community-wide preparatory phase.
 - Successful female FFS/APFS graduates attracting the attention of other women.
 - Social norms and related control, often strong among women themselves; what is acceptable, common, habitual. However, these social boundaries are not absolute.
 - One of the series of interconnected questions that should be answered in the preparatory phase of an FFS/APFS programme and the formation of groups is: "Who receives the information, what channels are used to disseminate the information, and who is giving the information?" And another, no less important: "Who can participate, who is allowed to participate, who is able to participate, and is there somebody for whom FFS/APFS experience would be helpful, but who is being left behind?"
- How can human capital be developed with the focus on the social aspects FFSs/APFSs?
- quality FFS/APFS programmes, facilitators, master trainers, strong national and regional (global?) FFS networks, information exchange, capacity building, etc.;
 - additional, continuous support (such as training and coaching) for FFS/APFS facilitators in relation to specific topics, such as gender equality, women's empowerment, gender-based violence, social inclusion, etc.

3.3

Farmers' stories

Part of the exercise involved identifying and describing farmers' experiences and success stories in order to better communicate the impact of FFS at the individual and community levels, and in this case, using the farmers' voices.



CASE 1

I would most probably be dead

Donald¹⁹
(Karamoja, Uganda)

Donald lives in Karamoja, in the north-east of Uganda, with his family. He has five children.

After visiting his field, we looked for some shade and sat down under a tree. **“My life has completely changed,”** says Donald. He explains it was a combination of various factors: **“After years of the disarmament campaign, during its second forced disarmament phase my gun was confiscated. I was in a state of panic: I didn’t know how to make my living. I had always been a raider; guns were my mother and father. I was just lost.”** His frustration increased his attachment to alcohol, and he continued stealing animals from his neighbours anyway. **“I was a bad guy. I was doing bad things, making my living as a raider, rustling cattle, assaulting car drivers. I used to live in the bush, coming back to the village to see my family and bring them something very sporadically. I wasn’t taking care of them, and in fact two of my kids died in that period. Everything was left on my wife’s shoulders,”** says Donald.

After the disarmament, opportunities to become involved in development activities organized by various national and international bodies increased.

¹⁹Names have been changed.

“Before the APFS, I attended a short-term practical training course on agricultural skills, so when the chance to enrol in the APFS arose, I was ready. I already had some knowledge and, unlike others, I had faith,” says Donald. He joined the APFS group focusing on vegetable growing in 2012. **“At the beginning, there were 30 of us, then five people left and then other ten. They were sceptical; they just didn’t believe we could succeed. I had nothing. My only option was to believe that it would work.”** And indeed it did work. Donald explains that the group members’ income increased enough even in the first year to allow them to buy some small livestock. **“At the end of the same year, I had ten goats, and that was when people started asking. Then I decided to send my kids to school. The year after I bought mattresses and started growing maize on an additional piece of land. We also have a solar panel that produces enough energy to charge cell phones, work the radio and have light during the night.”** In the following years Donald bought his own cows. After a short pause, he adds: **“Thanks to the APFS, I’ve learned that I’m able to earn my living pretty well through vegetable growing, and that has saved me. If all this hadn’t happened, I would most probably be dead.”**

Relations with his neighbours, who know his criminal past, have significantly improved as the knowledge he acquired and the option to share it made it possible to overcome some of their old disagreements. **“Some of my neighbours started their own gardens following my example. They come to ask me for advice.”** Donald describes the

transformation of his relationship with his wife: **“We spend much more time together now, talking, planning, discussing things, and making decisions together, for example what to sell or what to grow, etc.”** He explains that even their eating habits have changed: he and his wife are now sharing meals together. **“What I learnt at the APFS is that, if you want to be successful, you need to communicate and collaborate with others.”**

Donald continues: **“Like I say, I’ve changed completely. I’m so attached to what I’m doing, to my agricultural work. I’m also the chairperson of our group, and I joined the local church. You know what, I’m able to motivate people.”** He explains that his life experience has given him the ability to understand various situations a person might encounter over the course of their lifetime. If somebody has problems, it is more likely that they will opt for extreme solutions. **“In the past, two of my neighbours have fallen completely into alcoholism. I talked to them, I started bringing them with me to the field, and later I offered them a part of my parcel, and they have continued working there since then. Another case I’m now trying to find a solution for is a guy who continues to steal – I’m working on that. Some community members come for some advice, for example when there are conflicts between neighbours.”** After a while he adds: **“There has been nothing else in my whole life I have benefited from more than participating in the APFS.”**

CASE 2

You need to make decisions together

David
(Karamoja, Uganda)

David lives with his large family in Karamoja, semi-arid sub-region in north-east Uganda, close to the border with Kenya.

Like many of the younger men in Karamoja, David was a raider: **“I was stealing cattle in neighbouring villages. You know, livestock is very important here. My past has left my body full of scars.”** Back then, the only viable way to get cattle, as David saw it, was to steal it. He explains that he had previously made an attempt to grow some crops, but without any significant success. **“I felt frustrated and was in difficulties because it was hard to secure a minimum income for my family. I tried to ask my friends for help, but it didn’t work. This frustration was causing violence. Yes, I was using violence at home.”**

David continues, explaining that when the opportunity to join the APFS arose in 2012, he accepted immediately: **“I was attracted because I wanted to be the same as people from the town, coming here with clean clothes. But also simply because raiding was dangerous. So I was trying alternatives.”** Participating in the APFS changed David’s life: **“In the past, we were just poor; we didn’t even have money to buy basic things like soap. We were eating whatever was available. Today it’s different: we have control over**

what we are consuming, because we decide what to buy. Nowadays I live a good life; my family has clean clothes and I have my cows." He believes that his ability to prevent and solve conflicts greatly improved: "I learnt to solve problems calmly. I don't leave any conflict unsolved, and I'm able to solve it in a peaceful way." He says that the APFS strengthened the community's existing capacity to react to and mitigate conflicts that might arise inside the community. What inspired him about the APFS was that, despite the fact that there were various people there with various, sometimes contrasting, ideas, they were always able to find something they could all agree on. "This of course influenced our lives outside the APFS," adds David.

He explains that in the period prior to him joining the APFS, he used to have constant conflicts with his first wife, mostly due to the scarce/limited availability of money and poor living conditions. Since then, a lot has changed: David has two new wives. Two of the three wives belong to other APFS groups, and all together are able to successfully secure their livelihoods. When describing changes in household dynamics, David says: "Thanks to the APFS, I've learnt that the only way a family can develop is through shared decisions. You need to make decisions together." He also explains that at the beginning, some community members were opposed to certain changes and the introduction of new approaches: "this was solved with time. They saw that doing things differently works, so they started imitating it in the field and in the family."

David's participation in the APFS led to an interest in land: "In the past, I didn't perceive land as something valuable. Now it's completely different; I've even bought other land. Besides taking care of cattle and all the work around that, I grow hedges to protect our houses and the village. We grow vegetables, sorghum, maize, sunflowers, beans and groundnuts."

"Sometimes I say that my life began with the APFS. Everything has improved. I see the future and I'm able to plan my steps. I've started saving money, I'm able to buy cattle, my family is healthy and wearing clean clothes. It's important to live a good life."



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CASE 3

I have more control over my life

Monica
(Karamoja, Uganda)

Monica lives with her extended family and three kids in Karamoja, a semi-arid sub-region in north-east Uganda, close to the border with Kenya. She joined her APFS group in 2012.

She is one of the three wives her husband married. All of them have their own field to cultivate, although the land is the property of their husband. **“Everybody can decide quite independently what to do in their field, but we usually discuss with our husband what to grow.”** Monica says that they were cultivating even prior to the APFS but with the knowledge and skills they gained, they decided to expand their activities. **“We grow sunflowers, sesame seeds, groundnuts and cow peas. A part of what we produce is for home consumption, but the majority is sold. My income has increased, and I’m allowed to save money in the VSLS.”** She also explains that the VSLS was an important change, as it opened up access to larger amounts of credit through proper savings, as well as through loans: **“I even started my own small business,”** she says.

Moreover, Monica explains that thanks to participating in the APFS group and the fact that she has improved her agricultural knowledge and skills, her success and improved economic situation have not gone unnoticed by other community members:

“My neighbours have changed their attitude towards me. They used to underestimate my abilities and I wasn’t perceived as important at all. This has changed. They see that I’m able to make my own living, that I can save money and if needed, I’m able to cover medical expenses, and that I can make a commitment. They respect me now. For example, they come to ask me for advice, or how they can take part in the APFS,” says Monica, who seems very proud of herself.

In terms of household dynamics, she explains: **“My relationship with my husband has always been quite fine. We haven’t experienced any serious problems, but what changed after the APFS is that I feel equal. I have my financial resources, and it’s me who decides what to do with them. This makes me feel that I am on the same level as my husband. Generally, I feel I have more control over my life. I can plan better, and I rely on my own work and things I produce. I’ve also decided to have more kids, but only when the three I already have have grown up a bit more. So I’ve started planning when to get pregnant. It gives me more control.”**

CASE 4

No more sorrow

Albina
(Karamoja, Uganda)

Albina was born in Karamoja, a semi-arid sub-region in north-east Uganda which borders with Kenya. She joined the APFS in 2011: **“When the opportunity to join the group arose, I didn’t have any doubts,”** she says.

Her path in life has not been always without difficulty. She spent fifteen years with her husband, and had five children with him. However, they did not marry officially “with cattle”, meaning that her husband never paid the bride price of 60 cows to her family. After her husband suffered a series of misfortunes – some of his family members lost their lives, 200 heads of cattle were raided and his gun was stolen – he accused Albina of casting a spell on him. Shortly after this, he remarried, this time officially, and had more children. Albina returned to her parents’ house.

It was during this period that she joined the APFS. **“The first year wasn’t very successful because of drought: the sorghum harvest failed. The second year we started growing vegetables and it was a success. As a group, we earned a considerable amount of money, which allowed us to start cereal banking and brought in additional income.”** Albina received a loan from their VSLS to make a small investment, and she bought goats. With the income from her new agricultural activities, she was able to repay the loan. She cultivates mainly sorghum, groundnuts and vegetables for home consumption and sale.



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She used to cultivate even before the APFS but **“I was selling all my limited amounts of produce just to have some income, so I had to buy food.”** Albina has also started sending her children to school.

In the meantime, Albina’s husband has changed his mind and started convincing her that they should get back together. **“It took time. I wasn’t in favour of such an idea, but in the end my father convinced me, mainly because of our kids.”** So in the end she agreed, and her husband moved in with

her: **"This is unusual in our society. Usually it's the woman who joins the husband."** She continues: **"It seems to me that my husband has changed. He probably realized he was leaving his family for nothing, influenced by his family's sort of superstition. But another person who has changed in the meantime is me."** In addition to the technical skills that allow Albina to successfully manage her agricultural work, she says: **"What I learned at the APFS is how to understand others and solve and prevent conflicts."**

Albina had problems accessing land: **"Currently, we are working on my husband's land, which was given to me to use. Actually, I work there together with him, because he doesn't have any other income, and our kids are helping. I'm quite independent in making decisions on cultivation-related aspects and the use of income, but I tend to share plans with my husband. He also takes care of our children, unlike in the past."**

She remembers that in the past her circumstances were very precarious: **"I was very poor. I had only one piece of clothing that I wore the whole year. Even other women tended to exclude me. Others didn't think I was important at all. My standard of living has improved; now I can decide what to wear. I'm strong, I know what to do and how to do it. People know this, and they follow me. If I need to, I can take a loan and I'm able to repay it. I tell you, [there is] no more sorrow."**

CASE 5

All my children have to finish their studies before I go

Christine
(Karamoja, Uganda)

Christine is a smiley and energetic lady. She lives in Karamoja, a semi-arid sub-region in north-east Uganda, close to the border with Kenya. Her husband passed away some time ago, and she takes care of her six children. Christine joined her APFS group in 2011. **"People in the village told me there is the opportunity to enrol in the APFS. It seemed like an interesting initiative."**

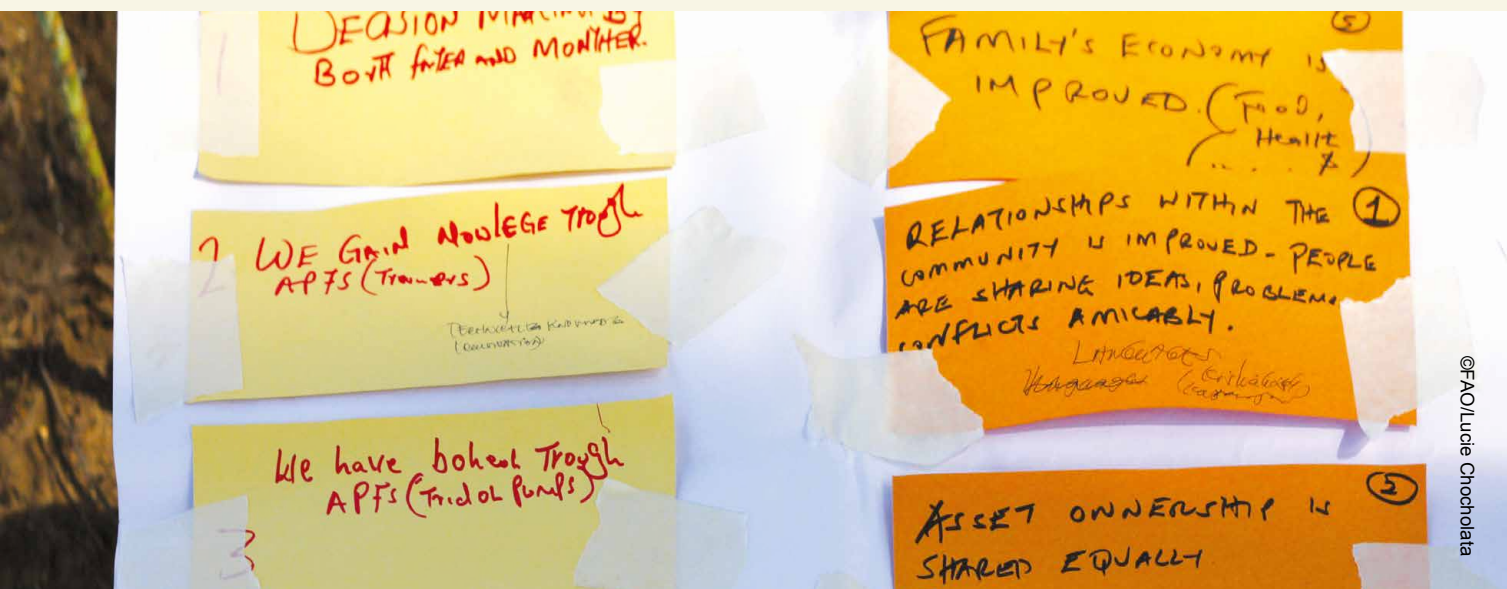
She explains that agriculture has always been the main source of her limited income: **"Farming was difficult. I was struggling with basic things. Many times I found myself without seeds when the rain came. And people were not very willing to support me, because I would have trouble to pay them back."** Christine describes how she used to struggle to manage her household and provide for her children's basic needs, and the food insecurity they used to experience. **"I was constantly asking somebody for something,"** she says.

"Thanks to the APFS, not only did I learn how to manage my work better, work out the right timing for sowing, use less seeds with the same end result and establish a marketing strategy, but most importantly, we started working together as a group. Not only do we have our vegetable garden which secures a significant income for us, but we've also started helping out on each other's personal

fields. We use a rotational system, where the group works together in one person's field and then moves on to someone else's," says Christine. As a result of improved relations in the community, her knowledge and success have made her a role model for other people in the village: "They come to ask for advice on how to do this or that. They know I'm independent. I'm able to rely on myself, and if needed, there is still our group to offer support to its members. You know, my opinion has started being seriously taken into account in our community. They pay attention to what I say now. This is a big difference compared with the past." Christine currently cultivates sorghum, groundnuts, cowpeas, sunflowers and vegetables. She stores part of what she produces and sells the rest.

"I used to have 14 cows, but they were raided, and now my priority is to invest in my kids' educations." All six of Christine's children

are at boarding schools in localities up to 60 kilometres from the village, and the eldest daughter studies social work and social administration at the university in Kampala. She explains that it is her and, from time to time, her friends who support their studies. If she doesn't have enough money, she takes a loan from their VSLs. Christine tries to motivate her children to dedicate themselves fully to their studies by sending additional money to those of them with excellent results. "Some people admire and approve of my decision to insist so much on education, but from time to time there is still somebody asking me why I'm sending my daughters to school, why I don't just make them marry," says Christine, laughing. "Education is so important. My kids want to study, so they study. When you are educated, you always find a job. Before I go, all my children have to complete their studies."



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CASE 6

I appreciate most that I know how to do things

Peter
(Karamoja, Uganda)

Peter lives with his family in Karamoja, a semi-arid sub-region in north-east Uganda close to the border with Kenya. He joined the APFS group in 2012, later than others from his village. **"The VSLs has allowed us to obtain enough money when it was needed."** Peter explains that this also helped resolve the problem of food insecurity in his household. **"We really used to have little food. Life was difficult. We only had a small field and were cultivating sorghum, maize and sunflowers, and we had no animals."**

"At the APFS I learnt when to sow without waiting for the first rains, and how to manage risks as a result of floods. I started planting fruit trees such as mango, papaya, guava and citrus, [and learnt] how to grow vegetables. As a result, we've rented additional land and expanded what we produce: I've planted fruit trees. The vegetables we produce are essentially for home consumption. I even hire casual farm workers to help us in the field," explains Peter.

He describes that his communication skills have improved significantly thanks to the APFS: **"I've learnt how to listen to others, to what they say, and also how to clearly explain my opinions and my reasons for doing or not doing something. And even in case of any disagreement, I'm able to solve the problem**

in a peaceful and calm way." Peter explains that in the past, he was not considered important at all by the community. What's more, he had no animals, a lot of debts, and his family used to struggle with satisfying its basic needs. **"I was alone; nobody used to care about me. I had no friends, and there used to be frequent conflicts with my wife."** This has changed for him substantially: **"Nowadays I'm independent. My produce ensure enough food for the family, and there's still a lot left over for sale. I have no more debts. At the same time, I've made many new friendships: there is always somebody coming to my place to say hello, and people invite me to ceremonies. Of course, there are also people envious of me, but I think I'm respected now."** Peter has nine children. All those of school age are attending school, and his eldest son has graduated in philosophy and is now doing a Master's in theology.

"I appreciate most that I know how to do things."



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CASE 7

I think we inspire people

Augustino
(Karamoja, Uganda)

Augustino lives in Karamoja, in the north-east of Uganda, together with his family. He has eight children.

He learnt about the APFS and the opportunity to enrol from the local authorities. **"I used to cultivate even before, but my knowledge was quite limited. I was following traditional approaches and it wasn't sufficient. Moreover, as I learnt new skills, I discovered that I also have the capacity to pass on what I know to others, and I like it. I'm able to influence others and be patient."** Augustino says that thanks to the APFS, he has realized the importance of preparation and planning, deciding on a strategy. He cultivates primarily vegetables, but also maize, beans and groundnuts. Augustino's family diet has changed thanks both to their own produce as well as access to financial resources: **"Apart from during festivities, we used to consume basically cereals and some wild greens the whole year,"** he says. **"My field is large enough for my family and all my kids,"** he adds. He also has ten goats and two cows, and produces honey. **"I used to have more cattle in the past, but it became a source of sorrow due to the continual raiding, so I decided to concentrate on other activities."**

He explains that he reflected on and revised his priorities: **"Now what really counts for me is educating my children well so they will**

be able to take care of themselves and can live a good life." All his children of school age are attending school. He describes how his kids imitate him in almost everything he does. **"I used to feel stressed in the past – not anymore. I have enough money, which allows me to plan what I want to do. Life is easy now. Our living standards are good, and I'm grateful for the opportunity I had through the APFS."**

At the community level, and particularly at the group level, he sees that there has been a decrease in conflicts and cases of gender-based violence. **"I believe this stems from the fact that women and men now work together in the field – this came mostly from the APFS. Moreover, the example the APFS group gives has been generally adopted by other community members, in terms of both agricultural skills and the way of doing things and communicating."** He explains that communication has also improved in his family, with both his wife and his children: **"We share much more information than before."** He adds: **"The APFS experience has made most of its members well known in the community. People tend to involve us in all kinds of activities. For example, there are community meetings where pressing topics might be tackled as part of the discussion, and from time to time the community authorities invite us as a group to express our point of view on topics such as violence in the home. As a group and as individuals we have become important. People are interested in our ideas, proposals and activities. I think we inspire people."**



CASE 8

The APFS has opened our eyes

Paska
(Karamoja, Uganda)

Paska lives with her family in Karamoja, a semi-arid sub-region in north-east Uganda, close to the border with Kenya. She has eight kids. Paska joined her APFS together with her husband.

“I’ve changed my approach to life. I used to sleep late. I wasn’t really able to do anything – hardly any farming. I was sort of lazy and felt demotivated. You can’t have new ideas if you are in bed. You can only learn new things from others.” Paska explains that through the APFS, she has discovered her potential, and the fact that she is able to make her own living motivates her. **“I’m motivated to learn new things, to take an active approach to life and plan what else I can do. In contrast to the past, I wake up early and I go to the field.”** She says that the work and the contact with others in the APFS have helped her find a fair way of dividing up tasks among her children and family. **“It wasn’t anything specific, but the principles and functioning of the APFS has made us change our attitudes. It’s opened our eyes; it’s inspired us.”**

She joined her APFS group together with her husband, and explains that it was an important time for both of them, as they underwent personal development that has improved their relationship. **“We used to have a lot of conflicts, and each of us was**

making decisions on their own without regard for the other person. We had separate limited incomes without much sharing. Now we make decisions on how to use resources together and, for example, if I don't have enough money for the weekly VSLS savings, my husband covers the amount. This is because of the availability of money, among other things, but also because we are much more unified now."

Paska was given her father's land to use, even though officially he is still the owner. Other land belongs to her husband. Together with her husband, she cultivates maize, beans, groundnuts, sunflowers, vegetables and cowpeas. **"And we also have twenty goats,"** she adds. She explains that thanks to the APFS, they learnt about nutrition, and this, together with the availability of food and money, has changed how they eat at home: **"Before it was basically quantity we cared about; now it's quality. We've realized how important a varied diet is for the**

human body." Paska's family is self-sufficient in terms of food, and when the weather conditions are favourable **"we don't need to buy almost anything, and if the season is bad, I can organize myself so that we have some reserves before prices increase."**

All her children of school age are attending school. **"We want them to study at university,"** says Paska. **"Thanks to the APFS, I've realized that it's not necessary to use force in order to educate kids. The interaction and open discussion we practise at the APFS has spread to our families. We talk a lot with our kids, discussing various topics with mutual respect."** Paska adds that relations within the group are quite strong: **"We look out for others: when a member has some difficulties, others support him/her individually with a donation, or through the social fund we created in the form of an interest-free loan."**



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Most FFS groups develop collective action, going beyond agricultural work, towards non-professional problem solving and mutual help



4

Conclusion and next steps

We live in a quickly changing and interconnected world, facing new circumstances, both social and environmental. Our capacity to cope with these challenges depends to a large extent on our ability to adapt, make the right decisions, build strong inclusive communities and create collaborative social environments. All these elements, in addition to technical agricultural skills, are being either directly or indirectly addressed by the FFS/APFS. The FFS approach can be seen within this context as a fully **dynamic process** that is evolving over time and has a significant impact on community dynamics.

Quality FFS/APFS programmes are an important and very tangible tool that can be used to empower rural communities,

The FFS approach can be seen within this context as a fully dynamic process that is evolving over time and has a significant impact on community dynamics. Quality FFS/APFS programmes are an important and very tangible tool that can be used to empower rural communities.

It helps to develop knowledge, skills, self-confidence, communication (both horizontal and vertical), mutual trust and understanding, the exchange of information, collaboration, solidarity, social safety nets and the confidence to innovate.

improving their access to information, developing their critical analysis and decision-making, optimizing productivity, improving food and nutritional security, strengthening rural institutions, and positively affecting the sustainable management of natural resources. All these aspects are particularly relevant for vulnerable groups, and may contribute to social protection as a result of community empowerment and the development of community support mechanisms and safety nets. FFSs/APFSs have an impact on human, social and financial capital, and contribute towards sustainability in its social, economic and environmental pillars.

The interviews and focus group discussions conducted with graduates in Karamoja confirm that the FFS/APFS experience following FFS/APFS principles and necessary timing has had a significant impact on both personal and group/community empowerment. It helps to **develop knowledge, skills, self-confidence, communication (both horizontal and vertical), mutual trust and understanding, the exchange of information, collaboration,**

solidarity, social safety nets and the confidence to innovate. The FFSs have thus had a beneficial effect not only on farmers' technical skills and capacity to make informed and considered decisions, but **also on the community as a whole, as well as household dynamics.** The participatory nature of the FFSs **strengthens community relations, and develops participants' ability to listen to the opinion of others, express their own point of view and find common solutions through communication, while also building mutual trust within the community.** Moreover, as an enabling environment, the FFSs/APFSs²⁰ offer an important opportunity to move away from traditional role models and household dynamics (the latter is especially relevant for women).

Changes in attitudes and role models in the communities appear to have been driven to a significant extent by the FFSs/APFSs. The findings of the focus group discussions and individual interviews conducted with

²⁰ Assuming a group does not perpetuate inequalities.

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female graduates in Karamoja confirm that participating in the FFS/APFS been a very important experience for them. This is not only due to their improved technical skills, increased self-confidence, more opportunities for networking, and the greater recognition they receive from the community, but also and especially due to the **economic aspects of empowerment**. In this process, **women's improved or altered self-perception, greater self-confidence, and reimagining of their own role in agricultural activities**, are crucial in order for change to occur. Women's empowerment leads to **greater social and physical mobility, has an impact on decision-making** at both the household (e.g. over the use that income is put to) and community levels, and the potential informal **support systems/networks**.

The findings of this exercise indicate that as a consequence of FFS/APFS participation, significant changes are occurring at the household level in terms of **decision-making, improved communication, reduced levels of gender-based violence, greater attention**

paid to education, an increase in school enrolments, and better relations and collaboration between partners, as well as to a certain extent the division of labour and shared responsibility for household tasks. Baseline studies at the beginning of FFS/APFS programmes should therefore also focus extensively on the social and cultural context and the community to ensure that FFSs/APFSs are able to reflect that context, and are **relevant and suited to the specific needs of local people and their communities**. A crucial element is therefore the **FFS/APFS facilitators and master trainers, who should have/develop the necessary sensitivity and skills to carry out the work on gender equality, social vulnerability and social inclusion**.

Furthermore, the FFS/APFS approach **enables and facilitates access to rural services**, and in some cases, where these are missing, creates them. These could be for example **financial services/access to credit provided by a VSLs**, including **social emergency funds** created/developed and managed by the groups themselves, or else **productive infrastructure** provided within the same or a complementary programme.

Women's empowerment leads to greater social and physical mobility, has an impact on decision-making at both the household (e.g. over the use that income is put to) and community levels, and the potential informal support systems/networks.



FFS brings together knowledge and experience of farmers

Other examples include **inclusive advisory services offered as part of the FFS/APFS learning process**, and knowledge and experience sharing which is usually easily extended beyond the FFS/APFS groups to other members of the community. In such a way, the social and economic opportunities of FFS/APFS members, and to a certain extent those of other community members, are broadened.

The FFS/APFS approach enables and facilitates access to rural services, and in some cases, where these are missing, creates them.

Usually time is needed in order for changes in dynamics at the community and household levels to become visible, and the findings of this exercise confirm this. **Their impact was more evident and, more importantly, alluded to and appreciated more by graduates over time.** Moreover, in cases where FFS/APFS facilitators had **greater knowledge and more skills relating to social issues, the positive impact on the community and gender dynamics was more pronounced** and vice versa. However, to examine the impact of FFSs/APFSs on social dynamics and relations within a community, there needs to be careful consideration of the context and initial conditions. The findings from the focus group discussions in Karamoja also reveal that **the longer an FFS/APFS group**

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has been running, the greater importance FFS/APFS graduates attach to the social outcomes of their participation. The newer groups considered economic benefits and technical knowledge in particular as the most positive effects of the FFS/APFS on their lives. Longer-running groups, where members continued to work and engage in activities together, emphasized social benefits, such as social cohesion, more solidarity and mutual support, a decrease in conflicts and gender-based violence, (information) sharing, greater respect from family and the community, improved relations at the household level and increased participation in decision-making. These groups still tended to perceive financial aspects and technical knowledge as still important but more ordinary (see Figure 5). All the participants in this exercise stated that their **circumstances in life had significantly improved and their livelihood opportunities increased.**

Furthermore, non-formal education²¹ approaches are considered beneficial for the stabilization of peace and security in Karamoja, despite the fact that they were not specifically designed with peacebuilding or peace education in mind. **Improvements in the security situation and social cohesion** were a positive outcome that occurred as an unintended consequence (Datzberger, 2017). That said, the multifaceted dimension of **FFSs/APFS introduced to post-conflict localities and those affected by protracted crises** should be reflected on in order to inform future programmes about such contexts, and increase their potential and sustainability. The example of Karamoja demonstrates that a combination of social, cultural, economic and environmental factors influences the lives of communities in very complex ways.

Protracted crises, such as the one in the Karamoja sub-region, have a significant impact on social capital, interactions, ties and connections, as well as values and trust at both the family and community levels (Avis, 2016).

All the participants in this exercise stated that their circumstances in life had significantly improved and their livelihood opportunities increased.

²¹ Any organized educational activity outside the established formal system (Datzberger, 2017).

Non-formal education approaches are considered beneficial for the stabilization of peace and security in Karamoja.

These connections and ties are seen as increasing trust, information sharing and the number of shared norms, and influencing attitudes and aspirations. **Social connections thus play a crucial role in risk mitigation and recovery processes.** The FFS/APFS approach and its core principles are thus extremely relevant, as they not only directly, but also and especially indirectly, address the issues damaged by the crisis. It is evident that the FFSs/APFSs are much more than a technical approach or a simple technical tool. What is making the difference is the **experience farmers are gaining over time at both the professional and human levels.** We should be able to make use of the approach's huge potential to create **environments of change**; that is, **enabling environments.** Experiences from other countries and, possibly, regions may help complete this picture. Discussion and a deeper analysis of related aspects, and identification of examples of good practice, will hopefully continue within the FFS/APFS networks regionally and nationally.

Social connections thus play a crucial role in risk mitigation and recovery processes.



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Challenging conditions of the region

4.1 Next steps

The previous chapters offer an insight into the FFS/APFS graduates' experiences and perceptions in relation to their participation in an FFS/APFS, and the impact and changes this process has had on their lives and those of their families and communities. The FFS/APFSs' main thematic areas with a social dimension were presented in order to illustrate and make more visible the potential of the FFS/APFS approach in creating this *environment of change*. The question is therefore **what could or should be the implications of this for programme-/project-oriented work?** What can programmes working with an FFS/APFS approach do differently to boost their potential for producing positive individual and community-wide changes in relation to gender dynamics, and communities' ability to collaborate, take collective action and improve their resilience? And how can FFSs/APFSs be made more inclusive?

Possible next steps could take various directions, involving different emphases and local contexts and responding to a number of needs. Below are some points reflecting the findings of the exercise which were discussed with FFS/APFS colleagues involved in it. Furthermore, this work adds another piece of the puzzle. Worldwide, FFSs/APFSs have been introduced to a wide range of different cultural, social and agricultural contexts; they have been adapted to suit local needs

using various strategies and under diverse conditions – for example in post-conflict zones, displaced communities and localities affected by protracted crises – as well as with various degrees of community involvement and participatory approaches during the preparatory phases.

Given Karamoja's specific context, which in recent decades has been heavily marked by poverty, violence, human rights abuses, the erosion of the traditional intergenerational authority system, and limited opportunities for securing a stable livelihoods, **the FFS/APFS approach is a highly relevant type of intervention.** First, due to its multifaceted dimension, which either directly or indirectly impacts various levels of personal and community life. Second, due to its relatively long-term duration, which allows the necessary time for interpersonal, intracommunity and, often, intercommunity relations to be created or strengthened. Third, when the technical content is context-relevant, it contributes significantly to the diversification of livelihood strategies. Fourth, it explicitly promotes principles of equity, active participation and discussion as a means of understanding, creates

It explicitly promotes principles of equity, active participation and discussion as a means of understanding, creates an environment conducive to inclusion, and thus acts as a promoter of new role models.

an environment conducive to inclusion, and thus acts as a promoter of new role models. Fifth, the following outcomes were observed in all countries in which this exercise was carried out: strengthened relations within the community, improved ability to communicate, improved ability to find peaceful solutions and thus prevent conflicts, and the creation of community safety nets. That said, one of the main prerequisites for success is effective human resources, which in this case are the FFS/APFS facilitators.

The majority of FFS/APFS (and FFS/APFS programme) components and processes can be analysed and designed in a way that accounts for issues of gender equality and women's empowerment, and social inclusion (including vulnerability analysis), and which also looks at the impact that they might have on community empowerment (see Figure 8).

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The following are the key points to be considered when designing and implementing FFS/APFS-related interventions in the aim of exploiting the approach's potential to create an *environment of change* and boost such aspects as community empowerment, gender equality and women's empowerment, and social inclusion:

- **No positive impact without good human resources** – Facilitators are key in unlocking the FSS/APFS approach and groups' potential. In addition to their technical and communication skills, their personal characteristics and sensitivity

Figure 8 Looking forward: programme/project level



No positive impact without good human resources: facilitators are key in unlocking the FFS/APFS approach and groups' potential.

to topics need to be (and in most cases are) carefully considered. This is one of the basic FFS/APFS principles and should be followed when implementing FFS/APFS programmes. The findings of the group and individual discussions suggest that only a small percentage of FFS/APFS facilitators feel comfortable or knowledgeable enough to pick up on a situation with gender implications arising from group dynamics and interactions and further develop/work with the topic.

- More **tailored opportunities for building capacity** in relation to gender identity and roles, gender equality, women's empowerment, vulnerability analysis, social exclusion/inclusion and gender-based violence are needed in order to boost social change which FFSs/APFSs can then advance or support. Special training for facilitators and master trainers (e.g. special focused training, long-term support/coaching, part of regular/refresher training), helping them to develop their own context-specific capacities and tools, is crucial for approaching the above-mentioned thematic areas.
- National and regional FFS/APFS networks can make a significant contribution when it comes to the

preservation, development and exchange of FFS/APFS-related knowledge and experience through human capacity that has been built up at the national level. **Wider discussion within FFS/APFS networks** and a better understanding of these aspects is crucial in order to develop proper responses for FFS/APFS programmes enabling the approach to fulfil its potential.

- There were some differences in implementing the FFS/APFS programme in Uganda compared with other countries in which this exercise has previously been carried out. In some of these, the existing **public agricultural extension systems** were the key (and almost exclusive) partners, and it was primarily their network of technical staff that were involved as facilitators. Whereas in Karamoja, **various implementing partners** were involved in the implementation of the FFS/APFS programmes. The first option may involve issues associated with the usual top-down approaches to working under the paradigm of technology transfer of the traditional extension services. However, these structures often have specialized human resources that they can draw on relatively readily, and most importantly, they enjoy a certain continuity. The other model (used in Uganda), in which multiple actors mostly anchor their activity in

Social inclusion/exclusion needs to be carefully considered, analysed and adapted to the relevant context.

sequences of project implementations (thus, not exclusively related to the FFSs/APFSs), may produce a number of quality facilitators hired for a certain period of project implementation. When the project has ended, there are three possible scenarios for these practitioners: they are absorbed by other organizations, they adapt their profile to the available opportunities within the same sector, or they leave the sector. This may be considered a challenge in contexts where an effort is being made to build a strong **national FFS/APFS practitioner network**. Given **the extension services system in Uganda is changing**, the FFS/APFS approach and its related rich experiences at the national level may offer **relevant considerations and input for this process of change**.

- A **baseline study including a proper analysis of gender equality and social vulnerability issues** (including mobility, and access to and control over assets) and **targeting criteria** (who receives the information, who can/is able/is willing to participate) may have a significant impact on the overall inclusiveness of an FFS/APFS programme. (The latter is particularly important when accessing

Women (as well as some men) face particular obstacles that may limit their actual ability to benefit from development programmes, and thus also FFS/APFS programmes.

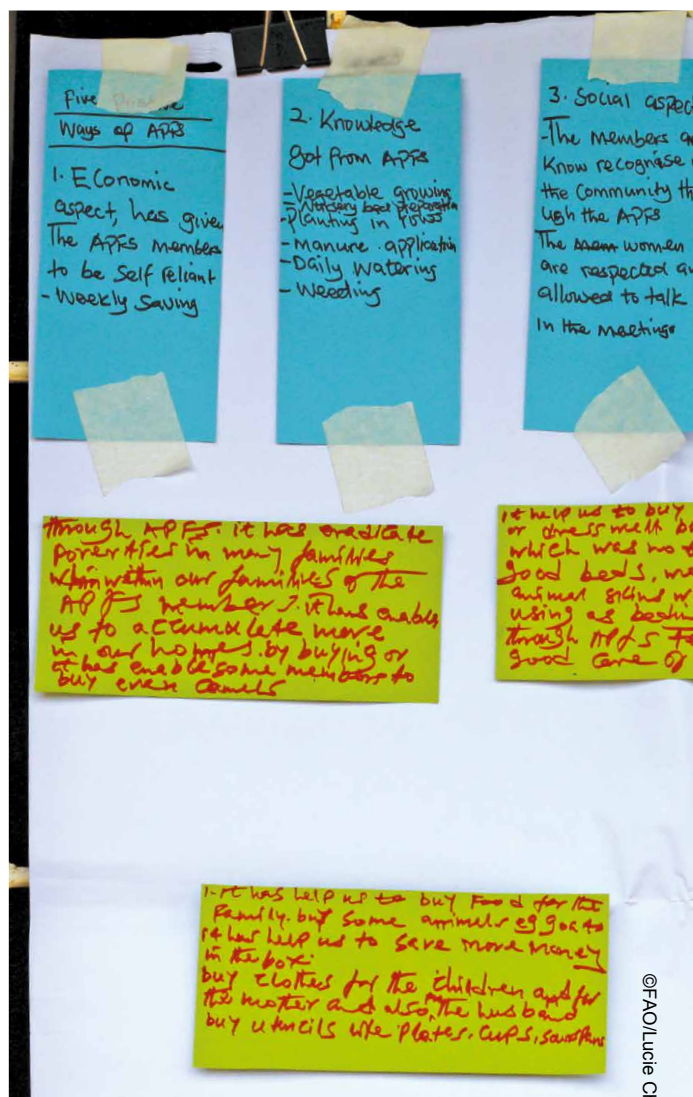
farmers through already established groups, cooperatives, associations and networks.) The use of quotas as part of FFS/APFS programmes is one of the strategies focusing on equal access to the FFSs/APFSs and should be applied where relevant.

- **Social inclusion/exclusion needs to be carefully considered**, analysed and adapted to the relevant context. The categories to be taken into consideration when focusing on social vulnerabilities include sex, ethnicity, nationality, age, health, family status, social stigma, membership of a particular social group, and poverty.
 - Women (as well as some men) face **particular obstacles that may limit their actual ability to benefit from development programmes, and thus also FFS/APFS programmes**. These might be literacy and educational barriers, limited opportunities for mobility, limited resources, or time constraints.²²

²² The lower levels of education common among women may limit their active participation or even be an excluding factor. In cases where one of the preconditions for participating in the FFS is that the participant hold the role of decision-maker over land, an agricultural activity or literacy, this may act as a limitation, especially for many women who nevertheless play an important role within the context of family farms.

- **(Non-)participation generally in both the formal and informal groups disseminating information**, and the possibility of joining an activity is proposed, may also play a key role.
- One of the series of interconnected questions that should be answered during the preparatory phase of an FFS/APFS programme and the formation of groups is: "Who receives the information, what channels are used to disseminate the information, and who is giving out the information?" And another, no less important: "Who can participate, who is allowed to participate, who is able to participate, and is there somebody for whom the FFS/APFS experience would be helpful but who is being left behind?"
- These points **need to be considered at all stages of a project cycle**. Different levels of analysis combining macro and micro linkages need to be used, paying attention to social relations and inequalities in power within them.
- **Gender equality and social inclusion are cross-cutting issues** and should be treated as such and thus reflected at all stages of an FFS/APFS programme.
- **Facilitators should be able to use all points of entry that arise throughout the process.**
- **Special topics and curricula are a direct and planned way of working with these thematic areas.**

Every group has its unique characteristics influenced by a combination of factors: its participants, facilitator(s), curriculum, special topics, and of course the broader social and cultural context.



Findings from the group discussions among FFS members, Uganda, Karamoja

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- No FFS/APFS is the same as any other. **Every group has its unique characteristics influenced by a combination of factors:** its participants, facilitator(s), curriculum, special topics, and of course the broader social and cultural context. Discussion within the FFS/APFS regional and national networks with a possible **contextualization of the FFS guidance document and developing the potential of course modules.**
- **M&E/MEL and impact assessment tools** in order to understand and communicate social changes resulting from FFSs/APFSs at the individual and community levels (empowerment, gender dynamics, social inclusion, etc.). The exercise could be extended to other regions of Uganda in order to record a wide range of experiences, local contexts and common patterns, and in order to build up extensive knowledge. This could also provide input for systematic monitoring and evaluation efforts. The potential of participatory methods as an interactive learning process and means of empowerment could then be further made use of/capitalized on. The findings from this exercise may offer a starting point. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods would no doubt be an advantage.
- Changes at the community level require enabling environments, and time to mature and become visible. There should be a **focus on the process, and a process-oriented approach**, within the context of FFS/APFS implementation.
- **Relevance to broader ongoing changes** – FAO has committed and contributes to an overall social change, elimination of hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition and eradication of poverty through its work in agriculture and agriculture related sectors. At the same time, FAO makes agriculture more inclusive and sustainable, helping communities to increase their resilience and face challenges of the changing climate. Thus, FAO needs to look at broader ongoing social, geopolitical and environmental changes caused by various aspects, using more intensively available (sometimes new) entry points. Collaboration and complementarity of activities with relevant stakeholders at country level may bring significant impact.



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Annex

Discussion module

FFSs, gender equality and women's empowerment, social inclusion, community empowerment, and nutrition-related decision-making

The following text summarizes a set of basic open-ended guiding questions covering the main thematic areas of this case study. They allow for modifications to the discussion flow and its content, for example in case the interview partner expresses something which is, according to him/her, more relevant or important for the discussion. The order, choice and formulation of the questions are decided based on the situation. The questions are grouped into four sections based on the type of discussion/interview, and each is subdivided into thematic areas.

Section A
FFS participants:
GROUP DISCUSSION

Section B
FFS participants:
INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSION

Section C
FFS facilitators:
INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSION

Section D
FFS programme coordinators:
INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSION

SECTION A

FFS participants: GROUP DISCUSSION

General/opening

1. *(Where relevant)* How many times a month/week/year does/did your FFS group meet?
 2. How was the group established (how did you find out about it/who suggested that you join)? What were the basic preconditions for participating in the FFS?
 3. What were your expectations before joining the FFS programme? What was your motivation for joining?
 - Please make a list of up to five expectations you had before joining the FFS.
 - Now mark those of them that were met.
 4. Can you see a positive impact in comparison with the period before you joined the FFS?
 - What are the biggest positives/benefits you have derived from participating in the FFS programme?
 - Please prepare individually (or in groups of three or max. four) a minimum of five positive aspects/benefits you have derived from participating in the FFS. *(Each item on a separate sheet of paper. Sheets collected and farmers invited to order the replies from the most to least valued in their opinion.)*
 5. What was the main problem(s) you faced before the FFS programme began?
 - How did you use to tackle these problems before joining the FFS?
 - How did you use to solve them? Using the knowledge that you learnt through FFS or using traditional approaches?
 6. Has knowledge and know-how adopted and used by your FFS group spread outside the group? Are there other people who have learned from you and who are using the know-how and approaches you shared with them?
 - If yes, which knowledge (what know-how, practices and approaches are they using most)?
 - If yes, how many non-group members in this village/area are using the know-how, practices and approaches developed by your FFS?
-

Gender equality and women's empowerment

7. Are there women involved in your agricultural domain? What are their typical tasks?
 - Please write down together a list of these tasks.
8. What percentage of the FFS group and the community was/is women?
9. Your FFS group has been/was working on the production of
 - What are the main tasks related to this production (across the whole year)?
 - Now, please indicate which of these tasks are typically performed by women/men? (If a task is typical for young women/men or elderly women/men, please indicate that too.)
*(Seasonal calendar of activities in the cultivation of their main FFS crop.
Legend: M – men, W – women, YM – young men/boys, YW – young women/girls, EM – elderly men, EW – elderly women)*

-
- Mixed groups only:**
10. You were able to meet regularly and work with women/men for quite some time. How has this changed your perception/opinion of women/men?
 - Possible additional question: **Has this changed the way you see your wife/ husband?**
 - **Please write down three main points.** Please write it in a way that it is readable. *(Women's and men's replies collected separately. Men read women's replies and women men's replies. Discussion.)*
 11. Daily activity clock
 - Please tell me about your average day. What do you do from the time you wake up until the time you go to sleep? *In single-sex groups, the men and women prepare a list of their typical activities during the day (using a large sheet of paper). The lists are displayed and women check the list prepared by men and vice versa and express their remarks. Discussion.)*
Possible discussion questions:
 - What are the points in common?
 - Do the activities of men and women differ? Why?
 - What activities do they share?
 - What can be seen as typically male and female tasks? Why this division?
 - Is there a fair division/workload of activities/tasks?
 - Who is involved in decision-making
 - relating to agricultural work?
 - relating to the household?
 - Could a man do the tasks of a woman and vice versa? If not, why?
 - How can a man and a woman in a household help each other with their daily activities?

- Women's groups:**
12. Can somebody describe a typical day at the FFS?
 13. Has the way you see/appreciate yourself changed in any way (after, during or thanks to the FFS programme you are participating/participated in)?
 - *Please write down up to three examples.*
(Then replies collected, read together and discussed.)
 14. Has the way your family, husband and community see you changed in any way?
 - If yes, could you tell us about it?
 15. What are the decisions you yourself typically make in your agricultural work?
 - *Please write a list.*
 16. Are there some decisions related to your agricultural work that you need to consult your family/husband about and that you cannot usually make yourself?
 - *Please write a list.*
-

- Men's groups:**
17. Are there women who work in your agricultural domain? What are their typical tasks?
 - *Please write down together a list of these tasks.*
 18. Are there other women farmers you know that are producing as you do? If yes, do you think they should have participated/should participate in an FFS programme. Yes/no and why?
-

- Social inclusion**
19. How was the group established (how did you find out about it/who suggested that you join)? What were the basic preconditions for participating in the FFS?
 20. When you think of all the people living in your village, are there some who would benefit from participating in an FFS programme such as yours, but who for some reason don't or can't?
 - Please could you all describe such a person, without saying his/her name? What characteristics does this person have?
 - *Group discussion, facilitator writing down the characteristics/attributes mentioned.*
 - (Social inclusion/exclusion) How can these people be encouraged to participate?
-

Social protection, community empowerment

21. (Where relevant) The FFS programme you participated in has formally ended.
- Are you still meeting with the FFS group? Do you still work together/have some activities in common? If yes, can you tell me about them?
 - Have you set up any formal or informal groups/common interest groups (e.g. cooperatives, NGOs)? If yes, can you tell me about them?
22. Do you think that when needed (for example when a harvest is poor for one reason or another), other members/ex-members of the FFS group should help you?
23. Do you think the FFS programme brought together your community? If yes, can you describe how, using examples (e.g. degree of cooperation (or problem-solving) among members of your FFS and within the wider community compared to the past)?
- Please give some examples and try to identify the three most important ones – please write these down.
(The sheet with the answers is then displayed e.g. on the wall/a flipchart)
24. Is there evidence of an increase in income **for men, women or both** as a result of:
- increased sales of products?
 - any innovative/alternative economic activity that has been engaged in within the context of or as a result of the FFS experience or the knowledge/social capital gained from it?
 - any other factor?
 - Can you describe this in more detail? What is the marketing procedure? Who has the power to make decisions over the income gained this way?

Nutrition-related decision-making/ knowledge

25. Have you learnt something new about nutrition (e.g. more about nutritional quality/values, a varied diet)?
- Have FFSs brought about changes in your household's food consumption (variety, quantity, frequency, etc.)?
 - If yes, can you describe how (greater diversity of products cultivated/produced or purchased)?

General/closing

26. If you were asked to propose/suggest changes to the FFS programme, what would these be?
- (Group discussion, list of ideas, if attention and energy is still there.)
27. Is there anything important/useful that I haven't asked and that you want to say?

SECTION B

FFS participants: INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSION

Some of the questions might have already been discussed and answered during the focus group discussion. The choice of questions will depend on any previous group discussions.

Inclusiveness of the programme, expectations

28. How did you find out about the possibility of joining the FFS? Who told you/who suggested you participate?
29. What were your expectations before joining the FFS programme? Which of these expectations were met?
30. Is there something that you didn't expect before joining and that surprised you in some way?
31. Please could you summarize the most important impacts the FFS had on your life and life in your community?

Gender equality, women's empowerment, social dynamics

32. Has the way you see/ appreciate yourself changed in any way (after, during or as a result of the FFS programme)? Could you describe how?
33. Has the way your family, husband/wife and community see you changed in any way (after, during or as a result of the FFS programme)? Could you describe how?
34. You were able to regularly meet women/men and work with them as part of the FFS for quite some time.
 - How has this changed your perception/opinion of women/men?
 - Has this changed the way you see your wife/husband?
 - Has the way you communicate with your family/partner changed? If yes, how?
35. Has participating in the FFS given you something new/useful? Do you feel you have more opportunities (in your professional and personal life)?
36. (FOR WOMEN) Would you recommend FFS to other women and why?

37. (FOR MEN) Do you think FFS is good for women farmers? If yes, why? If not, why?
38. (FOR WOMEN) Are there some constraints you face in relation to your participation in the FFS?
-

Community empowerment, social protection

39. What are the biggest positives/benefits **you** have derived from participating in the FFS programme?
40. As a result of being a member of the FFS, have you **as an individual** developed alternative economic activities to earn a living or increase your household income?
41. What do you see as the biggest benefits/positive effects of this FFS programme for your **group and the local community**?
-

Marketing, decision-making

42. Is your spouse involved in your agricultural work?
43. When (/if) your produce is sold, who sells it? Men, women, both, groups?
44. Does your husband/wife ask you before selling it or is it his/her individual decision?
45. When (/if) your produce is sold, who keeps the income? Men, women, shared? How do you decide/who decides how it's used?
46. Are other members of your family involved in agricultural work? If yes, who, and what are their main tasks?
47. Do you hire other farmworkers? If yes, occasionally or permanently? Who are these workers? Where do they come from?
-

Sustainability, IMP, natural resources management

48. Did your use of pesticides on your farm change in any way during and after your participation in the FFS programme? If yes, could you describe how?
49. As a result of participating in/having experience with the FFS, has your income increased? If yes, can you tell me about this? Can you explain why/how in your opinion this came about?
50. (Where relevant) Has there been an increase in crop production and/or variety as a result of the FFS programme? If yes, could you describe this in more detail and give some examples?
-

Land access

51. Do you own any land, either individually or jointly with someone else?
52. Do you own the land you work on personally (or share ownership with others in your household)?
- If no, how do you access land?
 - Do you rent it from someone?
 - Exchange labour for access?
 - Have a communal or group plot?
 - Other (please explain)
53. What is the area of land you own/rent/work on?
54. Does your husband/wife have separate plots he/she farms?
-

Other/closing

55. Were you involved in the evaluation of the programme you participated in?
56. Is there anything important/useful that I haven't asked and that you want to say?

SECTION C

FFS facilitators: INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSION

Formal programme set up, curriculum

57. May I see the curriculum of your FFS? *(If possible, ask before)*
58. Did the curriculum you followed during the FFS programme also contain some social/life topics (e.g. gender equality or women's empowerment)?
59. Have you been involved in this FFS programme from the beginning (before the groups were established)?
60. What stages and what steps in an FFS programme are, in your experience, crucial to the inclusion/deliberation/realization of gender equality?
61. Have you received training and/or support in relation to issues of gender equality or women's empowerment?
62. Were nutrition-related issues (e.g. dietary diversity/improved diets) included in the FFS curriculum?

Social inclusion

63. How was the group established (how did participants find out about it)? Can you describe the process of identifying and selecting the participants?
64. What were the basic preconditions for participating in the FFS?
65. Are there people in this area that, in your opinion, would have benefited from being included in such a programme but weren't?
 - Could you describe them? Who are they?
 - What would be the best strategy for involving them, in your opinion?
66. In your experience, who are the most marginalized groups in society/ the community (in this area) and why?
 - Are they involved in agriculture and how?
 - If yes, were they involved in the FFS programme?

- If not, do you think the FFS could be suitable for them?
 - Yes/no and why? If yes, what is the best way to involve them?
 - Do you see any obstacles (e.g. access to land)?
67. Were any of the topics relating to vulnerable groups in society raised during the FFS? If yes, could you describe them?
68. What should be done differently in FFS programmes to further enhance the inclusion and participation of marginalized/vulnerable groups in society?

In-group dynamics, gender equality and women's empowerment

69. Did any gender equality topics arise during the FFS meetings (even without being introduced by you)? If yes, could you mention in what circumstances and the nature of the topic?
70. What are the difficulties that used to affect women and where women play a key role in influencing decisions on change or other important topics? Could you give examples?
71. Do women speak their minds? Do they have a voice when the group meets? Do women hold leadership roles?
72. Is there any evidence of improved/alterd dynamics and collaboration among female and male participants that can be attributed to the activities or efforts of the FFS, or which have been significantly advanced by them?
73. How can men be encouraged to become involved in the work on gender equality and women's empowerment? Could you describe some concrete strategies that you use or would suggest using?
74. What should be done differently in FFS programmes to further enhance gender equality and women's empowerment, and to unlock the FFSs' potential of FFS in this regard?

FFS group, community empowerment, sustainability

75. What do you see as the biggest benefits/positive effects of this FFS programme for your group and the local community?
76. Is there any evidence of an increase in cooperation (or problem-solving) among participants of your FFS in comparison with the past?

77. Could you indicate the farmers from your group that, in your opinion, have made the biggest progress and why/how you think this happened? Is there any interesting story you can share with me (examples of what went well – good practice examples or success stories)?
78. (*Where relevant*) The FAO programme has finished. Was the group continued in some way after external support was terminated? Do you know if the group still meets even though the programme has formally ended? Or do they have some activities in common (professional/social)? If yes, on what basis (self-funding, other funds, other modalities, etc.)?
79. Is there any evidence of improved access to assets of a social nature (social capital: membership of organizations and groups, social and professional networks – formal and informal) that can be attributed to the activities or efforts of the FFS?
80. Is there any evidence of improved access to assets of a human nature (human capital: education, skills, knowledge, health, nutrition) that can be attributed to the activities or efforts of the FFS?
81. Is there any evidence of improved access to assets of a financial nature (financial capital: savings, credit, inflows) that can be attributed to the activities or efforts of the FFS?

**Recommendations,
needs, closing**

82. What do you think should be done in order to involve: a) more women in FFSs (both as participants and as facilitators); b) more of society's/the community's vulnerable groups?
83. What would you personally appreciate or need in order to work better/feel more comfortable when working with topics such as gender equality, women's and community empowerment, and social vulnerabilities?
84. Is there anything important/useful that I haven't asked and that you want to say?

SECTION D

FFS programme coordinators: INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSION

Some of the questions for facilitators are also used for programme coordinators.

General, programme set-up, training

85. Did the programme use strategies and tools for the promotion of gender equality or women's empowerment? If yes, could you mention some of them?
86. Did the programme use any strategies for involving women as participants and facilitators? What are the barriers to their participation, if any, in your opinion?
87. In your experience, what stages and steps in an FFS programme are crucial for the inclusion/deliberation/realization of gender equality?
88. Have you received specific training and/or support in relation to issues of gender equality or women's empowerment?
89. Did the programme use any strategies for involving marginalized/vulnerable groups in society? If yes, could you describe them? What are the barriers to their participation?
90. Were nutrition-related issues (e.g. dietary diversity/improved diets) included in the FFS curriculum?
91. Did the programme use participatory methods, involving FFS participants in programme evaluations?

Social inclusion

92. In your experience, who are the most marginalized groups in local society/the local community and why? Are they involved in agriculture and how?
 93. If yes, were they involved in the FFS programme? If not, do you think FFS might be suitable for them? Yes/no and why? If yes, how could they be involved? Do you see any obstacles (e.g. access to land)?
 94. What should be done differently in FFS programmes to further enhance the inclusion and participation of marginalized/vulnerable groups in society?
-

Gender equality and women's empowerment

95. What should be done differently in FFS programmes to further enhance gender equality and women's empowerment and unlock FFSs' potential of FFS in this regard?
 96. Is there any evidence of improved/altered dynamics and collaboration among female and male participants that can be attributed to the activities or efforts of the FFS?
 97. How can men be encouraged to become involved in the work on gender equality and women's empowerment? Could you describe some concrete strategies that you use or would suggest using?
 98. What are the difficulties (cultural, social, other) that affect women? Could you give examples?
 99. What are the areas in which women play a key role in decision-making/influencing decisions? Could you give examples?
-

Community empowerment, social protection

100. Do you think an FFS empowers the community? If so, could you describe how? If not, why? And do you think FFSs have the potential to do so? If yes, what needs to be done in order to produce or enhance this effect?
 101. Is there any evidence of improved access to assets of a social nature (social capital: membership of organizations and groups, social and professional networks – formal and informal) that can be attributed to the activities or efforts of the FFS or has been advanced by them?
 102. Is there any evidence of improved access to assets of a human nature (human capital: education, skills, knowledge, health, nutrition) that can be attributed to the activities or efforts of the FFS or has been advanced by them?
 103. Is there any evidence of improved access to assets of a financial nature (financial capital: savings, credit, inflows) that can be attributed to the activities or efforts of the FFS or has been advanced by them?
-

Recommendations, needs, closing

104. What do you think should be done in order to involve: a) more women in FFSs (both as participants and as facilitators); b) society's/the community's vulnerable groups?
105. What would you personally appreciate or need in order to work better/feel more comfortable when working with topics such as gender equality, women's and community empowerment, and vulnerable groups?
106. What should be done differently in FFS programmes to further enhance community empowerment, in your opinion?
107. Is there anything important/useful that I haven't asked and that you want to say?





NOTE

This discussion module has been developed by the author for the purposes of the scoping exercise and subsequent case studies on “Farmer field schools, gender equality, social inclusion and community empowerment” in Jordan, Tunisia, Senegal and Uganda. Some of the guiding questions have been adapted from *Impact Assessment of Pastoralist Field Schools in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda* (Hoeggel and Mbeyale, 2014) and *Independent Evaluation of SDC’s Performance towards Empowerment of Stakeholders from the Recipients’ Perspective* (Khot, Joshi and Dhamankar, 2007).

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