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CASE STUDY: ***The Impact of Local Farmers' Participation on the Effectiveness of the Design and Implementation of Food Security Projects, Case of LIAM (Lutte contre l'Insecurité Alimentaire et la Malnutrition/Fight against Food Insecurity and Malnutrition) - in Northern provinces of Burundi***

Submitted by

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(i) ABSTRACT

During my second year practicum, I worked as a member of the Technical Support Unit of the LIAM project at Louvain Coopération au Développement (LD) in Ngozi Burundi. LIAM project works in three provinces in northern Burundi, a region known for high levels of malnutrition and food shortage. In an effort to reduce households' vulnerability to food insecurity, LIAM promotes an agriculture sector-based approach, focusing on four crops (Rice, Beans, Banana and onion). In addition, the project promotes grassroots health insurance and offers saving, and credit services to local farmers to help them diversify their source of income. During my six months practicum, I worked specifically with Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) staff, to strengthen the project M&E system. During this time, I collected data focusing on the impact that project beneficiary participation has on the effectiveness of the design and implementation of the LIAM project. After a careful analysis of the project participation standard, and an extensive literature review, my study concludes that within LIAM, beneficiary participation is used both as a means to achieve local farmers felt needs and as an end goal in itself of the LIAM project. I also found that the project has capitalized on beneficiary participation to respond to their diverse needs, however, there are many missed opportunities to make the most of participation to reach down to the poorer. In addition, there is a clear strong inclination toward planner-centered instrumental use of participation in the project design phase. Moreover, the study found that although the LIAM project emphases targeting "smallholders" and "landless" farmers as the primary beneficiaries of its agricultural interventions– it is unclear that smallholders, let alone landless farmers, strictly defined, have been expressly targeted as project beneficiaries. Finally, after analyzing the overall application of participation principle within the LIAM project, the study found that LIAM's participation standard scores high on both White and Heck typologies, according to which the project could be classified, respectively, as transformative and empowerment.

(ii) EXECUTIVE SUMMANRY

There is wide consensus among food security actors over the existence of hunger and malnutrition in the world. Statistics from FAO (2010) estimate that there are approximately 1 billion undernourished people in the world, among which 239 million reside in Sub-Saharan Africa (FAO. 2010b. p.10). The state of food insecurity in Burundi, a landlocked country with a surface area of 27,840 square kilometers (10,747 sq. mi), and a demographic density of more than 300 inhabitants/ sq. km, the most densely populated country in Africa, after Rwanda (370 inh/sq.km), is not very different from the state of food insecurity in other food insecure sub-Saharan counties. WFP (2011) estimates that some 60 percent of Burundians are chronically malnourished and that only 28 percent of the population is food secure (WFP, 2011. para 1). Burundi's food security situation has deteriorated in recent years due to various factors such as: population growth that has outpaced food production, high global food prices, armed conflict, environmental changes possibly linked to global warming, natural and manmade disasters. Burundian's economy is small, open, fragile and essentially rural, with a narrow productive base highly dependent on agriculture; coffee and tea are the two main agricultural exports. Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world with 60 percent of the population living below poverty line. Local farmers make up a large number of the country's poor, considering that 85 percent of the population lives in rural areas, where the poverty rate is estimated to be as twice higher as in urban areas. (Louvain Développement "LD", 2008, p.11).

In a search for sustainable solutions to hunger and malnutrition in the wake of rising global food prices, many developments actors have come to understand the critical role of local small-scale farmers' participation for better food security outcomes. There is a number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that are partnering with local farmers and the government of Burundi, to increase access to food for the hungry but these efforts have not translated into food for many Burundian undernourished households. In this search for sustainable mechanisms to food insecurity, a lot of progress has been observed in the adoption of participatory approaches in food security projects, nonetheless, allegations persist that international NGOs, impose their projects on local farmers. NGOs are continually charged with failing to capitalize on local knowledge and thus fail to identify context-specific food security solutions that take into account the inputs of local famers.

LIAM: Lutte contre l'Insecurité Alimentaire et la Malnutrition/Fight against Food Insecurity and Malnutrition) - in Northern provinces of Burundi, is a food security project being implemented by an international NGO, Louvain Cooperation au Development (LD) in partnership with a peasant federation, UCODE asbl and a micro-finance institution, UCODE-MF; with funding from the Belgian Fund for food Security. *LIAM* targets 6000 vulnerable households and aims to decrease these households' vulnerability to food insecurity, using a holistic and participatory approach that takes into account the diverse nature of rural population needs. LIAM is a good illustration of NGOs' efforts to contribute to food security in Burundi. For my second year practicum, I chose to work with this organization in order to explore how international NGOs implementing food security projects can improve their strategies, by capitalizing on beneficiary participation so as to achieve better outcomes for food insecure beneficiaries.

The purpose of my study is to analyze the impact that the participation of local farmers has had on the effectiveness of the design and implementation of the LIAM project in northern Burundi.

Understanding that participation is an ongoing process that does not and should not end with need identification, this case study seeks to uncover the potential gaps in the application of the principle of participation in food security projects, focusing on the specific case of LIAM. It tries to explore the ways in which NGOs capitalize on farmers' experience for successful design and implementation of food security and poverty alleviation interventions. This study attempts to answer the following questions: How does the participation of local farmers impact the effectiveness of the design and implementation of food security projects? To focus the study, I try to answer the following specific questions:

1. What is the level and nature of local farmer participation in food security projects in general and in LD/LIAM in particular?
2. What is the influence of local farmers' participation on LIAM project targeting (pro-poor)?
3. How has beneficiary participation influenced the responsiveness of the LIAM project to their needs as well as lay the ground for project sustainability?
4. How has involving local farmers influenced the success of capacity building and skills transfer within the LIAM project?

Using a variety of methodologies, I gathered relevant information and analyzed the ways in which participation is translated into practice in development projects in general and LIAM project in particular. After a critical analysis, the study found that beneficiary participation is used both as a means to achieve local farmers felt needs and as an end goal in itself of the LIAM project. The findings of this study also show that even though the LIAM project seems highly concerned with farmers' empowerment, there is clearly a strong inclination toward planner-centered instrumental use of participation in the project design phase. Thus, the LIAM project scores low on White's typology as Instrumental participation in the design phase where beneficiary participation seems to not extend much beyond needs appraisal during the conception of project strategy, although farmers were implicated in decision-making regarding project activities. However, looking at the overall application of participation principle within the LIAM project, LIAM's participation standard scores high on both White and Heck typologies, according to which the project could be classified, respectively, as transformative and empowerment as the project result four intentionally aims to empower farmers through their federation.

As LD-LIAM continues to help its beneficiaries increase their access to food, it must continue to strengthen its approach that targets the most vulnerable farmers that have long been bypassed by development interventions in the region. Also, LIAM must standardize the use of participatory methodologies and as part of that process, the capacity of project and partners staff must be strengthened in participatory methodologies to food security projects. I have offered a set of guidelines that LIAM can use to substantively involve the beneficiary particularly the most vulnerable farmers to improve its pro-poor targeting as well as capitalize on indigenous knowledge to maximize project success, ensure sustainability and ultimately achieve project objective of food security and decreased malnutrition rate and poverty in the project catchment area.

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(iii) ACRONYMS

ADRI	Association pour le Développement par la Recherche Intégrée (Association for the Development of Integrated Research)
ADRAI	Association pour le Développement par la Recherche et l'Action Intégrées (Association for the Development of Research and Integrated Action)
ADISCO	Appui au Développement Intégral et la Solidarité sur les Collines (Support to Integral Development and Solidarity in the *Collines* -Administratives Entity)
AMR	Appui au Monde Rural (Rural World Support)
CAT	Cellule d'Appui Technique (Technical Support Unit)
CMT	Collaboration Médicale au Tiers-Monde (Medical Collaboration in the Third World)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CNDD-FDD	Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie - Force de Défense de la Démocratie (National Council for the Defense of Democracy - Force for the Defense of Democracy)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
Fbu	Franc burundais (Burundian Franc)
IFA	International Fund for Agricultural Development
FOMULAC	Fondation Médicale de l'Université de Louvain au Congo (University of Louvain Medical Foundation in Congo)
LD	Louvain Coopération au Développement (Louvain Development Cooperation)
LIAM	Lutte contre l'Insecurité Alimentaire et la Malnutrition (Fight against Food Security and Malnutrition)
LPPN	Lutte contre la Pauvreté dans les Provinces du Nord (Burundi) (Fight against Poverty in the Northern Provinces of Burundi)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MINIAGRIE	Ministère d'Agriculture et d'Elevage (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

PDDAA	Programme Détaillé de Développement de l'Agriculture en Afrique (Detailed Program of Development of Agriculture in Africa)
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
ROM	Results-Oriented Management
SCMTM	Solidarité et Coopération Médicale au Tiers-Monde (Solidarity and Medical Cooperation in the Third World)
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UCODE asbl	Union pour la Coopératives et le Développement - Association sans but lucratif (Union of Cooperatives for Development - nonprofit organization)
UCODE-MF	Union pour la Coopératives et le Développement - Micro-Finance (Union of Cooperatives for Development - Microfinance)
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WFP	World Food Programme

I. INTRODUCTION

FAO (2010) estimates that there are approximately 1 billion undernourished people in the world, among which 239 million reside in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (FAO. 2010b. p.10). This statistic highlights the critical need to identify sustainable mechanisms to end hunger and malnutrition, particularly in the wake of rising global food prices. In the search for effective, sustainable food security solutions, many food security actors have come to understand the essential role of smallholder farmers, not only because they make up a large number of those considered 'food insecure', but also and more importantly because they are one of the indispensable food security stakeholders. This argument is well articulated in an FAO 2009-2010 report *Growing Food for One Billion* that notes: "Smallholder farmers and their families represent some 2.5 billion people, more than one-third of the global population. Among them are the majority of the world's undernourished, we will not increase food production sustainably without them" (FAO, 2010a, p. 7).

The situation of Burundian smallholder farmers is not very different from the situation of smallholder farmers in the rest of the developing world. In Burundi, 67 percent of the total population lives below the poverty line. Local farmers make up a large number of the country's poor, considering that 85 percent of the population lives in rural areas, where the poverty rate is estimated to be as twice higher as in urban areas. (Louvain Développement "LD", 2008, p.11). Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the government of Burundi are joining efforts to ensure that food insecure households in northern Burundi have access to sufficient food sources. However, these efforts have not translated into food for thousands of hungry families. For my second year practicum, I chose to work with Louvain Coopération au Développement (LD), an international NGO implementing a project entitled "*Fight against Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in the Northern Provinces of Burundi" (*Lutte contre l'Insecurité Alimentaire et la Malnutrition au Burundi, provinces du Nord –LIAM) in order to explore how international NGOs implementing food security projects can improve their strategies so as to achieve better outcomes for food insecure beneficiaries.

In this Master Paper, I am going to analyze the issue of food security from a programmatic and procedural standpoint. That is to say, I am going to examine *the impact of small-scale local farmers' participation on the effectiveness of the design and implementation of food security interventions,* using the LIAM project as a case study. Specifically, through this case study, I am going to investigate the process through which LD designs and implements its food security projects, in addition to analyzing whether prospective beneficiaries' input, as primary stakeholders, is taken into account in these processes and to what extent. In doing so, I hope to uncover the nature of the challenges that NGOs confront in their efforts to address food insecurity for households and communities in a sustainable manner, as well as to identify potentially more effective approaches to achieve the goal of improved food security. The development question that I want to investigate and hope to answer at the end of this study is: How does the participation of local farmers impact the effectiveness of the design and implementation of food security projects?

Note: The use of the words "local farmers", "small-scale farmers" and "smallholder farmers" are synonymous and interchangeable throughput this paper.

The only way food security actors can ensure ownership, capacity building and sustainability – which are, according to Bolton, the three keys to the success of any development project – is to promote the active participation of local farmers in all stages of food security interventions (Bolton, 2007 p. 84). Building upon Bolton's theory, the central hypothesis of this case study is that facilitating active participation of local farmers in food security programming is essential to achieving successful food security outcomes.

Understanding that the term 'participation' often means different things to different people, I will begin the case study by defining and classifying the term 'local farmer participation', and then determine the level and type of local farmer participation within LD's food and economic security project (LIAM). The following section will analyze the influence of participation on LIAM project targeting (pro-poor), and subsequent sections will investigate how participation influences project sustainability and responsiveness to beneficiaries' needs. The final section will examine how involving local farmers can influence the success of capacity building and skill transfer when addressing food security and nutrition issues.

I.1. Brief history and presentation of Louvain coopération au Développement (LD)

I.1.1. General presentation of LD

LD is an international organization based in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. It was founded in 1981 within the Department of Agriculture of the University of Louvain under the name ADRI. Shortly after, the association changed its name to ADRAI (Association for the Development of Research and Integrated Action). In 1997, "Louvain Développement" was created following the merger of six associations close to the University of Louvain-la-Neuve (ADRAI, FOMULAC, CMT, SCMTM, Great Lakes, Medevuc). ADRAI became the leading branch in charge of operational administration before "merging" with Louvain Développement in 2000. Following this historical event, LD obtained recognition as a development NGO of the University. The organization has grown into a mid-size NGO with coordination offices in West Africa (Cotonou - Benin), in Central Africa (Bukavu - DRC) and in the Andes (La Paz - Bolivia). These offices are implementing projects in Belgium, Benin, Togo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Madagascar, Cambodia, Bolivia and Peru (Louvain Développement "LD", n.d).

The mission of Louvain Développement is twofold:

1) To facilitate the implementation of actions to improve the living conditions and health of poor, marginalized or excluded populations.
2) To support initiatives aimed at improving the political, economic and social context, in other words, general well-being.

In these countries, LD implements projects in three main domains of intervention: 1. Economic and Food Security, 2. Access to Health Care, and 3. Health Care. Under its Economic and Food Security program, LD has recommended four complementary axes of intervention as strategies to fight food insecurity: 1. Actions aiming to increase and/or secure agricultural production; 2. implementation and/or consolidation of social economic organizations that provide structural services to their members; 3. Actions aiming to diversify family income and the development of small enterprises; and 4. Actions

aiming to develop income-generating crops. These suggestions are motivated and inspired by LD's determination to find context-specific and sustainable food security solutions based on its expertise in the field of food and economic security**.** As for its Health Care program, LD focuses specifically on global health care and mental health. Lastly, LD's Access to Health Care program focuses on the promotion and development of grassroots health insurance associations and the organization of grassroots health insurance associations into unions or networks (Louvain Développement "LD", 2009, pp. 3, 4).

I.1.4. LD in central Africa - Northern Burundi

In central Africa, LD is active within the Great Lakes region in two countries and two geographically proximate post conflict zones: South Kivu in DRC and Northern Burundi provinces, the latter of which is the geographic zone of this case study. In northern Burundi, LD works mainly in the provinces of Kayanza, Ngozi and Kirundo. It is worth mentioning that LD's projects in northern Burundi are coordinated by a Regional Office located in Bukavu, South Kivu (Regional Central Africa Office), supported by a decentralized office in Ngozi (North Burundi). The former is responsible for the monitoring and implementation of LD projects in the northern Burundi region. The office in Ngozi benefits from technical support from LD's liaison office located in Bujumbura, the capital city (Louvain Développement "LD", 2009, p. 7).

LD is executing projects in its three domains of intervention (Economic and Food Security, Health, and Access to Health Care) in Northern Burundi (Louvain Développement "LD", n.d.). Between 2004 and 2008, through its project *Fight against Poverty in the Provinces of Northern Burundi (Lutte contre la Pauvreté dans les Provinces du Nord du Burundi 'LPPN')*, LD assisted a rural federation to strengthen the organizational and productive capacities of its association members -- 1250 community-based associations organized in 22 communal unions -- in the province of Ngozi. This project was funded by the Belgian Fund for Survival (Fond Belge de Survie- FBS), with the aim to "improve food security and living conditions of the poor and very poor populations in the target intervention area". This project also made possible the professionalization of a micro-finance institution (UCODE-MF: Union pour la Coopératiion et le Développement-Micro Finance), which offers credit and saving services to farmers through its 30 branches in rural areas (Louvain Développement "LD", 2009, pp. 5, 28, 29)

Following the LPPN project, LD is currently implementing a project titled *Lutte contre l'Insecurité Alimentaire et la Malnutrition-LIAM (Fight against Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in Northern Provinces of Burundi)*. This project is being implemented in partnership with two local organizations, UCODE asbl and UCODE-MF, the same partners that implemented the LPPN project. UCODE asbl and UCODE-MF are financially, administratively and legally autonomous organizations, although largely, they offer complementary services to the same population group. Within the LIAM project, UCODE asbl provides non financial services to farmers (training in improved farming techniques, facilitating access to agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, etc.), while UCODE-MF provides financial services (microcredit and saving opportunities) to the same farmers through its microfinance program. Note that LIAM is the object of this case study and will thus be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

In addition to the projects enumerated above, beginning in 2008, LD initiated a project to promote and support private entrepreneurship in two geographic areas in Burundi, within and around the capital city, Bujumbura, and around the secondary urban centers of Ngozi and Gitega. LD has also implemented maternal health interventions in the province of Ngozi since 2008 and is undertaking an action to install 10 grassroots health insurance associations in the provinces of Ngozi and Gitaga in collaboration with two local organizations (UCODE and ADISCO) (Louvain Développement "LD", 2009, p. 7).

I.2. Case study presentation - LIAM project

The LIAM project was designed by LD as a second phase of the LPPN project, based on the recommendations of the final evaluation of LPPN coupled with the results of a study carried out in 2008 by two food security experts, Ndayitwayeko and Ndorukwigira This study analyzed the issue of food security and malnutrition in Burundi with a specific focus on the Northern provinces of Ngozi, Muyinga, Karuzi, Kayanza and Kirundo. The study's objective was twofold. First, it intended to update the socioeconomic data collected in 2004 to establish a baseline for the first phase of the LPPN project. Second, the study aimed to include perspective beneficiaries in the analysis of their food security problems and encourage them to think about their causes and possible solutions.

LIAM targets 6000 households regrouped in 120 associations, selected based on the following vulnerability criteria (with priority given to the most vulnerable): Purchasing power, size of land owned, level and source of income, survival strategy developed during food shortage or major crisis, and family size. Accordingly, a household is classified vulnerable if: It has no income other than farming activity (and/or seasonal farm jobs) *or* owns less than or equal to 20 acres of land *or* has zero animals. The above list of vulnerability criteria is not exhaustive; it was left open to enrichment and adaptation at the beginning and throughout the project implementation (Louvain Développement "LD", 2009, p. 47)

The LIAM project's global objective is stated as: "By the end of year 2012, the living conditions of the populations of the communes of Gahombo, Bisiga, Mwumba, Gashikanwa, Kirundo, and Busoni are improved in a sustainable manner". Specifically: "By the end of year 2012, household vulnerability in the communes of Gahombo, Bisiga, Mwumba, Gashikanwa, Kirundo, and Busoni, to food insecurity will have decreased" (Louvain Développement "LD", 2008, p. 1). To accomplish the LIAM project objective, LD identified six ambitious and complementary intended results:

1. The production of food crops is increased and diversified in favor of 6000 households belonging to the most vulnerable groups;
2. Populations have access to non financial and financial services that allow them to carry out economic activities for the improvement of their living conditions sustainably;
3. Access to health services is improved for 80% of the 33,6000 project beneficiaries, and cases of severe and moderate malnutrition decrease by 20% within households benefiting from the project;
4. The process of restructuring and strengthening local farmers' associations and the development of agricultural sectors leads to the emergence of two complementary structures: a peasant federation and peasant support structure;
5. UCODE-MF becomes an efficient structure that offers saving and credit services adapted to the needs of the rural world;

6. The project results are capitalized and shared at the local, national and international levels (Louvain Développement "LD", 2009, p. 49).

The process through which LIAM came into being appears to have been guided by a shared analysis of food security issues and their possible context-specific solutions, as viewed by both experts and local populations. The flexibility of its vulnerability criteria to adaptation also offers an opportunity for beneficiary feedback to influence project implementation. In this case study to be undertaken, I will analyze in further detail the nature and impact of this participation of the intended beneficiaries on the effectiveness of the design and the implementation of the LIAM project. I will focus my analysis on intended project results one, two, and four, although the findings will likely be applicable to all aspects of the project.

I.3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of my study is threefold. First, I am interested in analyzing the impact that the participation of local farmers has had on the effectiveness of the design and implementation of the LIAM project in northern Burundi. Involving people in the process of identifying the root causes of their food insecurity, as well as the potential solutions, and designing a proposal based on this information does not alone make an intervention participatory, nor does it guarantee a sustainable solution. Participation is an ongoing process that does not and should not end with need identification. This case study seeks to uncover the potential gaps in the application of the principle of participation in food security projects, focusing on the specific case of LIAM. It tries to explore the ways in which NGOs can go beyond mere consultations that aim to simply extract information, to capitalizing on farmers' experience for successful design and implementation of food security and poverty alleviation interventions.

This study will attempt to answer the following questions:

General question:

How does the participation of local farmers impact the effectiveness of the design and implementation of food security projects?

Specific questions:

iii. What is the level and nature of local farmer participation in food security projects in general and in LD/LIAM in particular?

iv. What is the influence of local farmers' participation on LIAM project targeting (pro-poor)?

v. How has beneficiary participation influenced the responsiveness of the LIAM project to their needs as well as lay the ground for project sustainability?

vi. How has involving local farmers influenced the success of capacity building and skills transfer within the LIAM project?

A careful analysis that provides answers to the above questions will allow LD to develop a greater understanding of the nature and level of participation in the context of LIAM and examine its overall approach to food security and malnutrition projects. Furthermore, I believe that the findings of this study will enable LD to ensure project ownership and sustainability, which are essential to achieving the long term objectives of food security and poverty reduction among project beneficiaries. Lessons learnt will be useful for both the LIAM project as well as the organization's future projects.

My secondary learning objective is to enhance my skills in data collection and treatment, as well as monitoring and evaluation, by participating in the design and implementation of the LIAM project monitoring and evaluation plan. I hope to gain a deeper understanding and a greater command of monitoring and evaluation tools, in addition to learning more about the interconnection between monitoring and evaluation and the other project cycle phases. Lastly, I am interested in analyzing partnership and collaboration dynamics among development actors involved in food security issues in the South. Specifically, I want to identify NGOs partnering gaps and see how partnerships can be strengthened to enable more concerted, complementary, and effective responses to food security issues.

I.3. Contribution of this study to development field

This case study is pertinent because it will allow for greater understanding of how beneficiary participation influences the effectiveness of food security project design and implementation and thereby contribute to the literature on effective food security program strategies. Furthermore, the findings of both this Master paper and my practicum will bring a context specific perspective and understanding of the importance of local participation to the success of LD's food security program in northern Burundi provinces. I hope, through this paper, to contribute to the promotion of participatory approaches to food security by providing information that will enable food security organizations in northern Burundi and in other similar contexts to re-examine their approaches and design more participatory, context specific, and sustainable food security projects. The global contribution of this case study is thus the advancement of sustainable development, by adding to the body of information of best practices on how to effectively design and implement food security projects that lead to the desired outcomes for beneficiaries.

II. CONTEXT AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

II.1. Country background

Burundi is a small, landlocked country bordered by Tanzania to the East and South, Rwanda to the North, and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the West. Burundi has a tropical temperate climate with a rainfall pattern characterized by two dry and two rainy seasons, one long and one short. The long rainy season goes from February to June, followed by the long dry season that runs from July to September. Within its surface area of 27,840 square kilometers (10,747 sq. mi), the population was estimated in 2007 at 8.5 million habitants by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (As cited in Louvain Développement -LD, 2009, p. 11). With a demographic density of more than 300 inhabitants/ sq. km, Burundi is, after Rwanda (370 inh/sq.km), the most densely populated country in Africa. Note that this density is not equally distributed between regions; the provinces of Kayanza and Ngozi alone in northern Burundi make up 20% of the total population but only 10 percent of the country's land area. The average national household size is estimated at 5.6 people. In 2006, 85 percent

of Burundians lived in rural areas, where population explosion has led to land scarcity (Louvain Développement "LD", 2009, p. 11)

The Burundian population is made of three ethnic groups: The Hutu 85 percent, the Tutsi 14 percent and the Twa 1 percent, all speaking the same language, Kirundi, and sharing the same culture. The official languages of Burundi are Kirundi and French. Swahili is also spoken, especially in Bujumbura, the capital city, and along Lake Tanganyika (Louvain Développement "LD", 2009, p. 11).

The administrative organization of Burundi has five sub-divisions: *Provinces, Communes, Zones, Sectors and Collines*. In the name of decentralization, the Commune administration has been awarded considerable autonomy and power, including in the realm of law, law enforcement and finance. In addition, the Commune is responsible for promoting economic, social and cultural development of its population, but a lack of resources has not allowed the Communes to materialize this ambitious plan. (Louvain Développement "LD", 2009, p. 10)

Burundi gained its independence from Belgium in 1962; prior to being ruled by the Belgians, it was a German colony. Since its independence, the country has been plunged in a series of unending conflicts involving the two major Burundian ethnic groups, Hutu and Tutsi (Ndayizigiye, 2005, pp. 5, 6). The frequency and intensity of violent conflict has varied since independence, with peaks in 1965-69, 1972, 1988, 1991 and 1993 that exacerbated the already existing ethnic and regional divisions as well as extreme poverty. An estimated number of 300-400,000 Burundians have lost their lives in these conflicts; since 1993, approximately 1.3 million have been internally displaced or become refugees, about 16 % of the Burundian population at the time the article was written. (Brachet & Wolpe, 2005 p. 1).

In 2000, a peace agreement was signed in Arusha, Tanzania, under the mediation of Nelson Mandela, leading to a transitional government that was approved by all parties in October 2001 and became effective in November of the same year. A year later, a peace agreement was signed with three of the four major rebel groups. In 2003, President Pierre Buyoya, who had seized power through his second military coup in 1996, stepped down, ceding leadership of the transitional government to a Hutu president, Domitien Ndayizeye. Ndayizeye was seconded by Alphonse Kadege, a Tutsi, as vice-president, as stipulated in the Arusha peace agreement. A series of negotiations followed the Arusha peace talks and opened space for new signatories. In 2003, the CNDD-FDD of Pierre Nkurunziza, the major rebel group that had not signed the peace agreement, agreed to join the transitional government. In 2005, Pierre Nkuruzinza wone the elections and became the president of the Republic of Burundi (Brachet & Wolpe, 2005, p. 3). Pierre Nkurunziza is now serving his second mandate after winning the presidential elections in 2010. Officially, there is no rebel group currently operating on Burundian soil, although there are residual pockets of insecurity in certain areas where armed individuals continue killing innocent people. The most recent incident of this nature took place in a bar in Gatumba, near Bujumbura, in September 2011, where approximately 40 people were killed in cold blood by a group of armed individuals.

Burundi is one of the poorest nations in the world, with a high incidence of poverty, low socio-economic indicators, and high rate of unemployment. According to CIDA, Burundi’s literacy rate is not equally

distributed among sexes, as Burundian women make up a large percentage of the country illiterate. (as cited in Louvain Développement -LD, 2009, p. 12). Based on statistics gathered from 2005-2008, the annual birth rate is estimated at 283 births per thousand, with child mortality rate of 46 deaths per thousand children under 5 years of age. Infant mortality rate (less than 1 year) is estimated at 109 per thousand live births, while life expectancy at birth is estimated at 51 years, and adult literacy rate at approximately 66 percent (Unicef, 2011, p. 88). Statistics from the World Food Program (WFP) indicate that, from 2005-2009, 11 percent of Burundian newborns had signs of malnutrition at birth, and, 35 percent of children less than 5 years of age suffered from moderate or severe malnutrition (As cited in Unicef, 2011, p. 88).

The Burundian economy is small, open, fragile and essentially rural, with a narrow productive base highly dependent on agriculture; coffee and tea are the two main agricultural exports. Coffee has a special consideration in Burundi given that the government has not totally liberalized its market and continues to fix the price payed to coffee producers. A high inflation rate has characterized the local currency since 1993. In 1992, the exchange rate was one US dollar against 233 Burundian Francs (Fbu), in 2002, a US dollar was exchanged to 1000 Fbu, and in 2008, against 1200Fbu (Louvain Développement "LD", 2008, p. 12). Currently (2011), one US dollar is exchanged at 1,250 Fbu.

II.2. Problem Statement

The statement, "Africa is not hungry again, Africa is still hungry" (Judson, 1991, p. 1), was articulated to illustrate the state of hunger in Africa in 1991. This was five years before the World Food Summit, a historical event that took place in 1996 bringing together world leaders and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from around the globe to discuss the growing issue of food insecurity and malnutrition. The Summit set an objective to eliminate hunger and malnutrition and to achieve sustainable food security for all people (FAO, 1996, para 1). It is somber to acknowledge that twenty years after Judson's statement, and fifteen years after the World Food Summit, the reality of food security and hunger in Africa in general and Burundi in particular remains largely the same, with the exception of a few isolated cases of progress.

According to FAO (2008), "in sub-Saharan African, the number of hungry people has increased by 43 million over the last fifteen years to 210 million" (as cited in Oxfam International, 2009, p. 6). The most recent data from FAO estimate that there are 925 million undernourished people in the world, among whom approximately 39 percent (239 million) live in Sub-Saharan Africa (FAO, 2010b. p.10). From these recent estimates, it is clear that hunger remains a critical issue in Africa. It is important to note that smallholder farmers are among those groups most vulnerable to food insecurity. According to FAO, more than one-third of the global population; approximately 2.5 billion people, are small-scale farmers and their families, and the majority of the world's poor and hungry are among these families dependent upon small-scale agriculture (FAO, 2010a, p. 7).

The state of food security in Burundi exemplifies that of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in general. The food security situation has deteriorated in recent years due to various factors such as: population growth that has outpaced food production, high global food prices, armed conflict, environmental changes possibly linked to global warming, natural and manmade disasters, etc. The World Food Program estimates that

“only 28 percent of Burundians are food-secure” and roughly 60 percent are chronically malnourished. Burundi’s national “annual food deficits range from 350,000 to over 500,000 metric tons (in cereal equivalent, after commercial imports and food assistance)” against an average population growth rate of nearly three percent per year. In addition, per capita agricultural production is estimated to have declined by 24 percent since the end of the civil war in 1993 (WFP, 2011. para 1). According to the MINAGRIE Burundi and PDDAA (2009) “the production of major crops has declined drastically in the last fifteen years. Cereals have had the biggest drop with (- 41 %), pulses (- 37 %). This has happened despite a considerable increase in crop land of 39 % from 792,510 hectares (1982) to 1,295,000 hectares (2007)” (as cited in Mukhebi, A., Mbogoh, S., & Matungulu, K. 2010, p.3)

According to a 2008 study carried out by Ndayitwayeko and Ndorukwigira the rural population of Burundi, specifically the population of northern Burundi, can be classified among the poorest people on the planet. Surveying 96 rural households in four Northern provinces (Ngozi, Kayanza, Kirundo and Muyinga), the study found that the majority of the respondents live in a situation of chronic food insecurity. Some of the main causes of this food insecurity are: limited access to farmland, lack of agricultural inputs (fertilizer, seeds, equipments), lack of training in improved farming techniques, inadequate markets and marketing facilities, including lack of reliable market outlets, limited access to credit, heavy dependence on one source of income (agriculture), etc. (as cited in Louvain Développement -LD, 2009, p. 38).

The same study goes on to explain that 80 percent of household heads surveyed consider agriculture as their main occupation; however, only 40 percent own land, and 48 percent practice agriculture in the form of agricultural labor, thus increasing their vulnerability to food insecurity. In addition, 55 percent of respondents claim that a large portion of their income is allocated to food, which means that these families spend their income essentially to survive. Sending their children to school or to the hospital when sick is considered by these families as secondary and sometimes as a luxury. In this same study, it was found that approximately 90 percent of respondent households declare having only one meal a day in certain periods of the year, and 55 percent of them have gone a day without eating a single meal in times of food shortage (As cited in Louvain Développement -LD, 2009, p. 39).

The information presented by Ndayitwayeko and Ndorukwigira should not be generalized to the whole country of Burundi, due to the reduced geographic range of the study sample -- only four provinces out of the seventeen that compose Burundi were covered by the study -- in addition to the fact that the study was conducted in one of the poorest regions of the country. Nonetheless, it is clear from the statistics presented above that hunger and malnutrition is a serious development problem facing Burundi in general and its Northern provinces in particular.

Hunger is not only a problem that causes malnutrition, poor health and, in some extreme cases, death; it is also a development issue that deprives people of their capabilities to productively engage in all sectors of their lives. Access to food is a key to human development, without which it is impossible for people to develop their full potential and attain decent living standards in a given society. Accordingly, if development practitioners are truly serious about their work of ending the suffering of the world’s poor, the problem of hunger and malnutrition should be at the top of the development agenda for both SSA and Burundi. While a number of development actors are making strides by using participatory

approaches in the implementation of projects aiming to bring an end to food insecurity and malnutrition, despite their efforts, in many regions like northern Burundi, guaranteeing that everyone has access to adequate food is far from being accomplished.

Notwithstanding the progress observed in the adoption of participatory approaches in food security programs, allegations persist that international NGOs, including those working on food security, impose their projects and programs on their intended beneficiaries. NGOs are charged with implementing projects and programs without conducting in-depth needs assessments or feasibility studies in consultation with potential beneficiaries to determine underlying problems and realistic solutions and, consequently, failing to identify context-appropriate approaches that take into account the input of local communities. Regrettably, many NGOs that include the intended beneficiaries in their projects, fail to capitalize on beneficiary' local knowledge to continually inform the strategies of their projects. A well known African development actor and aid worker, Bolton Giles, offers harsh criticism of the lack of participation of local communities in the design of development projects, stating that "the aid industry has long been full of well-meaning foreigners who think they know just what the poor community needs and set about providing it, only to find their efforts ignored, or their nice piece of equipment unrepaired and unused" (Bolton, 2007, p. 84). According to Judson, "as it stands now, development policies are designed by 'experts' who sit in capital cities of the North - The tomato-paste processing plant built in an area of Sudan where no tomatoes were grown and the milk powder factory in an area where cows could not survive are classic examples" (Judson, 1991, p. 4). A typical result of such expert-driven food security interventions is nothing but useless investment of funds in projects that do not benefit the hungry and poor that the project was intended to uplift.

Citing Richards (1995), Miguel A. Altieri argues that for agricultural research and development to be beneficial to the rural poor, a "Bottom Up" approach that values local knowledge and uses participatory approaches to identify the needs and aspirations of small farmers as well as the specific contexts within which they operate is indispensable (Altieri, A. M., n.d., p. 2). FAO also recognizes the crucial role of "civil society organizations including farmers and consumer organizations representing the poor and vulnerable groups" as one of the primary stakeholders that should be involved in food security policy design and projects (FAO 2011, p. 7). Despite the role played by FAO, scholars, and other development organizations in advocating the participation of local farmers in food security interventions, important questions remain concerning the level and nature of small-scale farmers participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of food security policies and programs as well as the role of this participation in advancing effective project outcomes.

In order to provide answers to these questions in the context of continued failure of efforts to bring an end to household and community food insecurity, I have decided to explore how NGOs implementing food security projects can improve their strategies so as to achieve better outcomes for food insecure beneficiaries, using a food security project in northern Burundi as a case study. The rationale behind this line of questioning is that perhaps it is time to rethink food security interventions and consider that part of the solution to food security issues may lie in the hands of local communities. That is to say, successful food security programming should incorporate local farmers' input to the greatest degree possible in all project phases, from design to evaluation. While such recommendations are open to criticism of romanticizing the power of local knowledge and underestimating that of scientific

knowledge, one cannot downplay the importance of gaining a greater understanding of the role that smallholder farmers can play in promoting more effective food security interventions. Food security experts, policy makers and development practitioners often place great emphasis on local farmers adopting innovations, yet this approach that side-steps local knowledge and local farmers' sense of ownership may very well limit successful outcomes. It is critical to understand Judson's logic that "development is not something you do to people or for people but something you do with them" (Judson, 1991, p. 8) and examine how it can best be applied in the context of food security interventions.

III. CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

To gather specific, practical and verifiable information that fully answers my development question, this case study will employ a series of activities, including: 1) literature review; 2) internal document review; 3) semi-structured interviews; 4) conversation and meeting participation; 5) field visits and direct observations; and 6) participation in key project planning and evaluation activities (logical framework update, Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) training, and project mid-term evaluation). It is important to mention that some of these methods are overlapping, as more than one method may be used simultaneously. For instance, during a field visit and direct observation, I may also hold conversations and participate in meetings with project beneficiaries and staff. Or when engaged in project planning and evaluation activities, other information gathering methods may be used concomitantly.

i. Literature review

I have reviewed existing literature on food security interventions and the role of local farmers in food insecurity responses. From June through July 2011, I reviewed books and online resources, mostly scholarly articles and NGO reports, on food security and local farmer participation. This preliminary literature review allowed me to gain general knowledge in the field of food security as well as familiarize myself with the language used in food security interventions. After I started practicum, I realized the need for further research. I therefore started digging deeper into existing resources on food security in order to gain more detailed and context-specific information on the role played by local farmers in past and current food security interventions. Through this review, I sought to understand how local farmers can influence the effectiveness of the design and implementation of food security interventions to produce better outcomes for beneficiaries.

ii. Internal document review

I reviewed LD internal documents such as past evaluation reports, the LIAM project technical and financial document, a research report analyzing the state of food security and malnutrition in Northern Burundi provinces, the LIAM midterm evaluation report, etc. I also reviewed past field reports, project annual reports, different intervention strategies and action plans, and any other project documents containing useful information for this case study. In addition, I reviewed and helped update project data collection and monitoring tools to improve their effectiveness at capturing the information necessary to measure project indicators, and I helped design additional tools to strengthen the project data collection system. These activities allowed me to gain a thorough understanding of the LIAM project, including the nature and level of beneficiary participation, as well as of the food security and malnutrition context in Northern Burundi.

iii. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews

I conducted one focus group and two semi-structured interviews with key LIAM project staff. Specifically, I organized a focus group of four participants, one LD Technical Assistant staff along with three key staff from the implementing organization (UCODE asbl). To gather balanced information, I also conducted two semi-structured interviews with the UCODE asbl Director and with the Project Technical Assistant in charge of result four. The purpose of these interviews was to seek a deeper understand of the project scope and the role its beneficiaries have played and continue to play in the project decision making process. These interviews took take place in January 2012. Initially, I was planning to carry out similar interviews with project field workers, but due to time constraints, I was unable to interview staff at this level.

iv. Conversation and meeting participation

Beginning the first day of my practicum, I held numerous informal conversations with project technical staff as well as the Project Manager concerning the design and implantation of the LIAM project. Throughout my practicum, I continued initiating these discussions to deepen my understanding of the project's progress as well as difficulties encountered and strategies put in place to overcome them. A particular focus of these discussions was beneficiary identification criteria, the nature and level of beneficiary participation, and the role of beneficiary participation in assuring project success. I also participated in a number of meetings: biweekly staff meetings, monthly meetings, as well as quarterly reporting and planning meetings, and other circumstantial meetings. Being part of these meetings allowed me to assess the application of participatory approaches in the implementation of the LIAM project.

v. Field visits and direct observations

Throughout my practicum, I conducted approximately 12 field visits to collect project data and monitor project activities. These visits allowed me to gain field experience that elucidated the impact of beneficiary participation on LIAM project design and implementation. In addition, the visits allowed me to gather information through informal interviews with project field staff regarding the process by which beneficiaries were selected. Moreover, throughout these visits, I observed key project activities and beneficiary living conditions. These visits and observations enabled me to have a clear picture of project beneficiaries, their level of vulnerability and their involvement in the project. I was initially planning to hold interviews with project beneficiaries to determine their satisfaction with their level of participation and the process through which they were selected, but time did not allow for such interviews.

vi. Participation in the key project planning and evaluation activities

My practicum coincided with my host organization's adoption of a Results-Oriented Management approach (ROM). As part of the adoption process, the project team met several times to revise and update the project logical framework. I had the opportunity to participate in a number of these meetings, which enabled me to develop a technical understanding of the project and the roles and responsibilities of implementing partners as well as project support staff. A particular focus of these sessions was the

definition of key project indicators and their means of verification, in addition to the revision of certain project indicators and activities. Through these planning meetings, I was able to assess the level of commitment of the project team to employing participatory methodologies in gathering necessary data to measure project indicators.

During my practicum, the project hired an international consultant to build technical staff capacities on Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA). This training was followed by field work in which project staff used PRA to gather project data. By participating in these activities, I was able to gain a much profounder understanding of the project design, implementation, and evaluation processes, and to collect important data for my case study. After this training, the project underwent a mid-term evaluation, starting the third week of November and ending the third week of December. I was designated, along with the Project Technical Assistant in charge of monitoring and evaluation, to pilot the evaluation within the organization. This was a learning opportunity that enabled me to collect field data to answer my development question and validate or invalidate my hypothesis. In addition, playing a role in this evaluation contributed to the attainment of a secondary learning objective of this case study, which was to enhance my skills in data collection and treatment, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW: SMALLHOLDER FARMER PARTICIPATION IN CONTEXT

IV.1. Participation in development: Definition

The term participation has quite a wide range of definitions in the aid industry in general and rural development in particular. Different development actors have different interpretations of the concept 'participation', which in turn are carried over into development practice. In other words, the varying definitions of the term participation in rural development translate into correspondingly varied participatory approaches applied in the field. This lack of a common and universally accepted definition of the term 'beneficiary participation' in development projects gives development actors the latitude to bring participation into practice based on their individual understandings, interpretations, capabilities and interests. This line of reasoning is well articulated by Dianne Rocheleau and Rachel Slocum as they argue that "participation, like development, means vastly different things depending on who defines it and uses it, and to what end, where, and how." (edited by Slocum & Rocheleau, 1995, p. 17). Treror Parfitt makes many of the same points about the lack of coherence in the understanding of participation, which he refers to as the "ambiguity of participation". Examining various definitions of participation, Parfitt argues that the vagueness observed in some of the most common definitions of participatory approaches can create misunderstandings that in turn hamper consistency in their application when addressing issues such as power. (Parfitt, 2004, p. 537).

In the context of this case study, I have identified six common definitions and understanding of beneficiaries' participation in development projects that I believe also apply to food security projects. The first two definitions were presented by Bernard van Heck:

> (1)sensitizing people to make them more responsive to development programs and to encourage local initiatives and self-help; (2) organizing group action to give hitherto excluded, disadvantaged people control over resources, access to services and/or bargaining power (Heck, 2003 , p. 6).

The last four definitions were identified by P. Oakley *et al*, and cited in Partfitt as follows:

> (3) With regard to rural development… participation includes people's involvement in decision-making processes, in implementing programmes, their sharing in the benefits of development programmes and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes (Cohen and Uphoff, 1977); (4) Community participation [is] an active process by which beneficiary or client groups influence the direction and execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish (Paul, 1987); (5) Participation is concerned with…the organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control (Pearse and Stiefel, 1979); (6)Participation is considered a voluntary contribution by the people in one or another of the public programmes supposed to contribute to national development, but the people are not expected to take part in shaping the programme or criticizing its contents (Economic Commission for Latin America, 1973) (as cited in Trevor Parfitt, 2004, p. 538)

All the above definitions identify participation as a strategy for increasing the effectiveness of development projects, thereby enhancing their impact on the lives of their beneficiaries. In addition, each of these definitions represents a type or form of beneficiary participation observed in many rural development and food security projects. However, their differences, as notes Parfitt, exemplify the ambiguity at the epicenter of the participation concept, and these differences impact the ways in which participation is translated into practice as well as the ways in which beneficiaries are perceived and the roles that they play in the various project phases (Parfitt, 2004, p. 539). In the context of this case study, I define smallholder farmer participation based on Cohen and Uphoff's definition. That is to say that participation is the involvement of smallholder farmers in decision-making processes and in the design, implementation, evaluation, and sharing of benefits of food security projects/programs.

IV.2.Traditional/conventional approaches to participation in development

The concept of 'participation' in development has a particular historical and theoretical trajectory that plays a role in the multiplicity of definitions and understandings of this concept, as well as its application. In order to more fully understand the role of participation in influencing development outcomes, it is important to briefly summarize the participatory approaches that have traditionally been employed in the development field and how projects can be classified accordingly. According to Barbara Thomas-Slayter, traditional participatory approaches to development can be clustered into three main forms "(1). Peoples' organizations and co-operatives, (2) community development and (3) guided organization in large-scale projects" (Slayter, 1995, p. 9). Many of these approaches continue to inform current development projects, although they do not fully engage beneficiaries in project participation. In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to briefly analyze each of these traditional methods of participation and their development implications. In other words, I am going analyze how participation is translated into practice in these methods, looking at the nature and level of participation in each of these methods.

The first approach cited by Slayter, "Peoples' organizations and co-operatives", represents organizations that conduct people-oriented activities, such as welfare organizations, membership organizations and co-operatives. Operationally, welfare agencies have a very low level of participation in that they reduce beneficiaries' role to that of simple goods and services receivers. In other words, the only way in which beneficiaries 'participate' in projects to promote their well-being when welfare and relief agencies are delivering assistance is as passive recipients of project outputs. A number of NGOs still operate according to this philosophy; others, however, try to partner with membership organizations, but often without a good understanding of how these organizations can be empowered through project participation. Membership organizations include diversified groups of local associations created by people who share similar specific needs and interests. They are mostly oriented toward public benefits and operate with a more or less democratic model, giving their members the opportunity to participate in the decision making process of their groups (Slayter, 1995, p. 9). Co-operatives (in the context of this paper, agricultural cooperatives) funded by a higher institution, on the other hand, often operate according to top-down principles and thus fail to capitalize on the benefits of collective action, although the core motive of their creation is to mobilize local populations for collective action and stronger bargaining power in the value chain. In addition, co-operatives usually benefit the better-off (e.g. landowners and large-scale farmers) rather than the most vulnerable members of the community such as the landless and near landless farmers.

The second traditional approach to participation is community development and *animation rurale*, two types of programs initiated by colonial rulers to encourage the participation of local people in development projects. This approach aims to organize community members in order to better tackle a particular development issue affecting their well-being with very limited outside financial or technical support. This model has received a wide range of criticism over the past decades. The most significant is that community development fails to recognize the heterogeneous nature of local needs, interests and conditions. It is also regarded as a strategy used to promote government projects that are planned by bureaucrats with little knowledge of the root causes of local poverty (Slayter, 1995, p. 10). It should be noted that the traditional 'community development' method as explained in this paragraph is in many ways different from the community development strategies employed in more recent development practice and discourse, which center around the provision of external resources and technical guidance to support development projects enacted at the local level that intend to address the needs of a particular community.

The third traditional approach to participation is *guided organization in large scale projects*. In my view, this form appears more participatory in comparison to the first two in the sense that people are involved in the various phases of the project. A major factor that impedes full beneficiary participation in large-scale projects using guided participation is that, more often than not, these projects are externally-driven; that is to say, all decisions regarding project design, implementation, and evaluation are made by external actors without or with little beneficiary involvement or feedback. In many of these projects, the rapport between rural populations and development actors is "reduced to a simple working relationship" where the role that beneficiaries can play is determined and delimited by the supervising development actor. Guided participation in large-scale projects can take various forms, from "community-centered,

government- centered, to mass participation approaches". However, regardless of the form, a 'guided organization' approach means that it is up to the expert/planner to decide on the level and nature of local communities' participation in the various stages of the project (Slayter, 1995, p. 10).

To help contextualize the various levels and types of participation by rural populations, including small-scale farmers, in development projects, Heck, like Slayter, also classifies development projects according to the nature and extent of participation employed. According to Heck, development projects dealing with rural populations can be divided in two main categories, conventional and participatory. Conventional projects rely on some variation of the 'traditional approaches' to participation in development described by Slayter; their essential attribute is that they are characterized by top-down programming. They are planned without any or with very little beneficiary input and with no specified target group, as they intend to serve the whole population in a given geographic construct. Generally, these kinds of projects are large-scale, and they do not benefit the most vulnerable members of the community. Participatory projects, on the other hand, are designed and implemented with the explicit intention of promoting beneficiary participation in all phases of the project. Participation is conceived as an important project component that is an end in and of itself, not merely a means to an end as in conventional projects. In addition to these two mains types of projects characterizing rural development, there is a partial participatory approach. The later is observed in less conventional projects. In this approach, which is used more and more frequently in development projects, beneficiaries are consulted to express their needs and interests and are even included to some extent in the project implementation phase (Heck, 2003, p. 7).

IV.3.Variation in the type and level of participation in development –theory and practice and relevance to smallholder (or local farmers)

The general recognition in the development field of the imperative role of beneficiaries' active and effective participation for the success of any development project has led to an unprecedented promotion of participation in agricultural and food security projects throughout the world. As S. A. White asserts "the euphoric word 'participation' has become part of the development jargon, no respectable project can not use this 'in' word now, nor can it get funded without some provision for the participation of the people" (as cited in Michener, 1998, p. 2105). Unfortunately, despite the ever-increasing reliance on various participatory approaches, effective beneficiary participation still represents an issue that requires particular attention. As argues Parfitt "Participation is simply another means of pursuing traditional top-down development agendas, while giving the impression of implementing a more inclusive project of empowering the poor and the excluded" (Parfitt, 2004, p. 538). In this section, I will not focus on criticism of participatory development because these arguments have been well articulated elsewhere by a number of development analysts, including S.A. White, K.S. Nair, J. Ascrof (1994); J-P Platteau & A. Abraham (2010), and Bill Coke & Uma Kothari (2001). Rather, this section aims to illustrate variation in the type and level of participation in development, in both theory and practice.

The lack of a common understanding of the term participation among development actors, the failure to take into account the heterogeneous nature of local interests, and the lack or limited expertise in participatory approaches are all important factors that have potentially contributed to the birth of the

plethora of participatory approaches used in development projects. These factors have also contributed to the limited adoption of a truly participatory approach to development. Without claiming to have exhausted the immense literature on the various ways participation is brought into practice in development, I have broadly identified three significant typologies classifying the type and extent of beneficiary participation in development projects.

IV.3.1. Heck's typology

The first typology is the one offered by Heck 2003. According to the author, there are three types of beneficiary participation that I believe are also applicable to food security projects: (i) Induced involvement, (ii) Transitory mobilization for community development, and (iii) Group formation and empowerment. Heck's categorization is largely based on two distinct but interrelated factors: the objective of the intervention with regard to beneficiary participation (whether participation is considered a means or an end) and the level of that participation as it pertains to power, control, and decision-making.

(i) Induced involvement

Although the intended beneficiaries take part in project activities and receive benefits in return, beneficiary participation in a project that relies on 'induced involvement' is limited to a specific type of involvement in a limited range of project phases. Their 'participation' in the project is often referred to as cost sharing because beneficiaries are 'induced' to contribute labor and/or other resources to the project (Heck, 2003 , p. 6). In food security or agriculture projects, this contribution is usually in the form of labor and/or cultivable land. The beneficiary population, typically the village chef, is expected to allocate a piece of land to the project for pedagogic use, such as the application and demonstration of improved farming techniques. Farmers are than expected to work the land for free as their share of the project cost. In many development projects that use induced beneficiary involvement as a form of participation, the project design and the overall implementation strategy and plan are predetermined by the implementing organization without beneficiary input. In some cases, the intended beneficiaries are consulted by a team of 'experts' during the project formulation phase to provide their views. However, the manner and extent to which these views are actually incorporated in to the project design and thus the potential effectiveness of this approach in addressing the roots causes of beneficiary problems are subject to doubt, considering that participation of beneficiaries does not go beyond the needs assessment phase. In this type of project, participation is seen as a means to achieve the project outcome, not an end in itself. This type of beneficiary participation is mostly observed in conventional development projects, which, according to Heck, attempt to use participation for the achievement of the project goals not so much for the empowerment of the rural poor. (Heck, 2003, p. 7).

(ii) Transitory mobilization for community development

Projects that employ this form of participation mobilize community members to engage in a number of activities for the advancement of their community for a determined period of time. Participation is generally individual, although people often work as a team or in loosely organized groups. In transitory

mobilization, outside agencies seek to mobilize locals to participate in a project without investing in the long-term organizational potential of those they are mobilizing. Meaning, there is usually no planned support put in place to promote viable groups or organizations (Heck, 2003, p. 7). Similar to induced local involvement, participation is regarded exclusively as a means to achieve certain predetermined objectives. The relationship between development actors such as NGOs and the community is that of mobilizing agents on one hand and participant-executants on the other hand. This form of participation is not particular to a certain category of development actor, although in the past it was mostly used in rural state initiated projects; it is used by various outside agencies, local and central government officials, religious institutions, etc. in a variety of contexts. According to Rocheleau and Slucom, mobilization is as a form of instrumentalism; it is a strategy used by outsiders to encourage participation for the achievement of some predetermined goal [defined by outsiders]. It can also mean convincing people to do something even if it hurts their immediate or long term interests (Rocheleau & Slocum, 1995, p. 18).

(iii). Group formation and empowerment

According to Heck, projects that use this strategy often assign themselves a specific objective of "creating new or strengthening existing self-formed and self-run groups and organizations through which the rural poor gain access to resources, input and participate actively in the project, also by means of self-proposed actions" (Heck, 2003, p. 7). Development initiatives in which group formation is given particular attention do not consider participation as a simple means to achieve a development goal but as an end in itself. The larger objective becomes empowering the poor to become agents of change for their individual and community wellbeing. This form of participation is viewed as pro-poor; through their organizations, the poor and marginalized join in efforts to modify the oppressive system of the non-poor, consequently increasing their chance to gain access to resources and, also and more importantly, augment their bargaining power. The end goal of this process is to enable people to take an active part in the decision-making process pertaining to their lives and that of their community, thus building a foundation for sustained self-development. Development projects that operate within this mindset of intentional promotion of intended beneficiary participation in all projects phases -- needs assessment, beneficiary identification, project formulation, even the project framework and the project evaluation -- can be considered as fully participatory (Heck, 2003, p. 7).

IV.3.2 White's typology

The second typology was presented by White S.C. (1996). In his classification, White describes four types of participation (Nominal, Instrumental, Representative and Transformative), See Table 1 below:

Table 1 Interest in Participation

Form	Top-Down	Bottom-Up	Function
Nominal	Legitimation	Inclusion	Display
Instrumental	Efficiency	Cost	Means
Representative	Sustainability	Leverage	Voice

Transformative	Empowerment	Empowerment	Means/End

Source: White (1996), as presented in Michener (1998)

As notes Michener, White's typology is a perfect illustration of the divergence in expectations of stakeholders with regard to participation in development projects. It is only at the transformative level that both beneficiaries and planners share the same interest, which is empowerment (Michener 1998, p. 2107). In addition this table shows that development projects employ participation for various reasons. In Nominal participation, beneficiary's involvement is simply a strategy used by the implementing agency to gain legitimacy. In instrumental participation, projects use participation as an instrument to achieve project objectives, reducing participation to a simple means to achieve efficiency. Moving to the next level/form of beneficiary participation, project that use representative form of participation seek to get beneficiaries' input through the voices of selected community representatives. The concern here is not that of empowering the poor. It only at the transformative level that the project seeks to empower its beneficiaries, development projects using this form of participation regard participation not a simple means to achieve the project goal but as an end in itself.

White's typology is a lot similar to S. Paul's description of the levels of beneficiary participation in development projects. According S. Paul, there are five levels of beneficiary participation in development projects, "namely information sharing, process-nominal participation, consultations, decision-making and action initiative" (As cited in Perez, n.d). Note that the first three levels of participation are managed and controlled by the implementing agency. In this case, the agency decides to implicate beneficiaries in project processes but limits the extent of their participation to information exchange. In this case, the implementing agency reserves the monopoly to choose the project objectives, activities, and technology. In the last two levels, the shift in power allows the beneficiaries to take an active part in the decision making process and thus to influence the project's choice of technology and intervention strategy (Perez, n.d).

IV.3.3 Cohen and Uphoff's typology

The third classification of participation is given by Cohen and Uphoff (1980) (Table 2). Their classification includes the various stakeholders (local residents, local leaders, government personnel and foreign personnel). It also draws the attention to the various types of participation that occur in different project phases and the ways they are translated into practice (basis of participation, form of participation, extent of participation and effect of participation).

Table 2 Dimensions of Rural Development Participation

Kinds of participation	Participation in decision making Participation in implementation Participation in benefits Participation in evaluation

Who participates?	Local residents Local leaders Government personnel Foreign personnel
How is participation occurring?	Basis of participation Form of participation Extent of participation Effect of participation

Source: Cohen and Uphoff (1998) (as cited in Michener, 1998, p. 2107)

IV.4 Advantages of/constraints to participation

The failure of the majority of development efforts to bring about lasting change for the world's poor has led to a widespread consensus in the development community on the indispensable role of beneficiaries' active and effective participation for the success of any development project. As a voice in this discourse, Heck has identified a number of benefits of fully adopting participatory development approaches that should incentivize their utilization , which he has termed as follows: "Coverage, efficiency, effectiveness; adoption of innovation, production, successful results, self-reliance, [and last but not least] allowing the supportive institution to fulfill its mandate" (Heck, 2003, p. 10). Note that the many benefits of employing participatory approaches are not exclusive to the rural poor that a given project is intending to uplift but also carry over to the project implementing organization as well as the government of the country where the project is being carried out.

As Heck notes, there are multiple advantages of applying truly participatory approaches to development problems and projects. When effectively employed, such approaches allow the implementing organization to reach a larger number of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community (to improve project coverage and pro-poor targeting). One of the best ways to ensure this coverage is through group formation at the grassroots level. In addition, when beneficiaries are actively involved in a project, they contribute ideas and resources (such as labor, etc.), enabling an organization to use the limited resources allotted to a given project appropriately and efficiently. Moreover, when beneficiaries are implicated in monitoring and evaluation, they can help reorient a project and facilitate more successful outcomes, saving the organization time and resources that would have otherwise been wasted. Beneficiary participation also contributes to project effectiveness in the sense that, by sharing their indigenous knowledge of local realities, beneficiaries help the implementing organization to identify the root causes of problems and potential context-specific solutions. Heck also argues that participatory projects achieve a higher level of production while maintaining equitable distribution among beneficiaries (Heck, 2003, p. 10 & 11).

Concerning the adoption of innovation, more often than not, beneficiaries respond negatively to innovations when they feel excluded from a project. The best way to ensure successful introduction and wider adoption of any innovation is to encourage active participation of intended beneficiaries from the outset of a project. In the context of this case study, it is imperative to include small-scale farmers in all project phases if we are to expect them to adopt any farming innovation. Ultimately, when there is true participation, a project achieves successful results and ensures their sustainability, which leads to self-

reliance that in turn breaks the cycle of dependence on external agencies. As a result, rural poor boost their self-confidence as they gain more and more control over their resources and development activities in their community. In the end, both the beneficiaries and the supportive institution win as the beneficiaries become self-reliant and the project implementing organization fulfills its mission (Heck, 2003, p. 10 & 11).

It is important to mention, however, that the process of participation is not all rosy. The promotion and implementation of participatory projects encounter many challenges and constraints. Many development actors have argued that participation is time and resource consuming. J-P. Platteau & A. Abraham, complain that "there are both direct and indirect costs entailed by consensus-seeking procedures ---- Among the most evident direct costs are the considerable efforts and time spent in lengthy discussions at meetings and assemblies" (Platteau & Abraham, 2002, P. 114) In addition, Heck has identified a number of barriers to the promotion of participation in rural development that I have broadly divided into two categories, external and internal.

External constraints are factors that can hinder effective beneficiary participation in food security and other development projects but do not originate directly from the project implementing agency. These obstacles are contextual and include "political conditions/power structure, legislative barriers (lack of freedom of association), administrative obstacles (centralized public administration that controls decision-making process, resource allocation and information), socio-cultural impediments such as the dependency mentality, culture of silence; and other impediments such as level of poverty, lack of education, heavy workload, ignorance of right to organization, poor health conditions, etc." (Heck, 2003, p. 10). This list is not exhaustive; there are other factors that render full participation difficult or even impossible to materialize. One of the proposed strategies to overcome external obstacles, which will be further developed in the conclusion, is the promotion of policy dialogue and sensitization at all levels.

Internal constraints to participation are factors that are directly associated with the project implementing organization and its relation with the project funder. These obstacles are related to the obsession of donor agencies or government funders with quick, palpable results and their focus on activities executed rather than overall project impact. For many funding institutions, quantity matters more than quality. Yet participation is a process approach that takes time and its results are often best elucidated by qualitative rather than quantitative measures. In addition, many project implementing organizations still operate according to a top-down model with little decentralization. Planning, decision-making and implementation are all centralized, leaving no room for substantive beneficiary participation. Lastly, promoting participation requires special skills and enthusiasm, and thus a lack of talented, experienced personnel can impede the application of participatory approaches in rural development (Heck, 2003, p. 11).

Despite the internal and external constraints to participation elucidated above, as observed by Heck, "the main constraint of full and genuine participation remains political will" (Heck, 2003, p. 13). Participation implies a power struggle in the sense that, where participation is at play, power holders may feel like their interests are being threatened. In agricultural projects, for instance, land holders and

other better-off people in the community will often oppose participation of the poor in decision-making. The former may go as far as trying to influence the political and administrative structure in the community, to hinder any policy that aims at encouraging landless and near landless farmers to take part in a food security project. Another main challenge to the promotion of participation, as notes Rocheleau, is "to empower without being paternalistic, to enable without being to-down" (Rocheleau & Slocum, 1995, p. 12). In other words, it is often difficult for organizations and governments that have adopted a participatory approach to truly give up control to the underserved and poorer members of a community and not simply treat them as secondary participants in an unequal partnership.

It important to note that, the above mentioned obstacles should not be considered as reasons or excuses for not promoting participation in food security projects. Many of these challenges can be gradually overcome with skilled staff, patience and determination, as well as the identification and application of appropriate strategies to facilitate participatory approaches. Achieving full participation of beneficiary and other key stakeholders in development is a long process; it is not an overnight activity, so development actors should avoid the temptation of quick fixes. In the conclusion, I provide some potential strategies adapted from those suggested by Heck, that I believe can help promote small-scale farmers participation in food security projects.

IV.5. Elements of participation

Heck has identified nine critical building blocks that must be taken into consideration for the attainment of full, effective, and sustained beneficiary participation. These factors are: "Process instead of project approach, disadvantaged target group, education for participation (awareness raising), structuring of target group, resource mobilization by group members, economic and social activities, inclusion of group promoters, promotion of self-reliance and self-development, and the development of coordination and cooperation mechanism" (Heck, 2003, p. 8 & 9). It is worth mentioning that although important, not all the above elements are indispensable for substantive beneficiary participation in every project. Their application depends on the size and scope (small or large scale), the duration and the nature of the project.

V. CASE STUDY FINDINGS AND SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION: ANALYSIS OF SMALLHOLDER FARMER PARTICIPATION IN THE LIAM PROJECT

This section analyzes the theory and practice of local farmer participation in the LIAM project, a four year food security project currently underway in northern Burundi provinces. A recent mid-term evaluation of the project conducted by an independent evaluator deemed overall project implementation to be effective, based on a participatory appraisal of 503 qualitative and quantitative indicators (Note that these are not project indicators but evaluation indicator), involving the project's main stakeholders. Using a ranking matrix of the project's pertinence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, coherence, impacts/effects, and cross-cutting themes such as gender and environment, the project scored 66 percent on the performance ladder (VLAENDEREN, 2012, p. 50).

In complement to this evaluation, I will consider project effectiveness specifically in the context of beneficiary participation. To answer my research question, I will analyze the role of farmer (beneficiary) participation and its impact on the effectiveness of LIAM project design and implementation, exploring how participation is used or misused in the LIAM project. The analysis will examine farmer participation in the LIAM project with reference to the types and level of participation, as well as the intent of participatory approaches (means or end), as discussed in the various participation typologies presented in the previous section. I will first examine participation policy and practice in the LIAM project as conceived and applied by the implementing stakeholders, namely Louvain Cooperation au Développement, the implementing organization, and UCODE asbl, one of the implementing local partner organization. Subsequently, I will analyze the impact of the level and nature of beneficiary participation in LIAM on particular aspects that I deem critical for the success of any development project: pro-poor beneficiary targeting, responsiveness to beneficiary needs, sustainability and capacity building.

V.1. Implementing stakeholders and participation policy and practice in the LIAM project

5.1.1. Participation policy at the Louvain Cooperation au Développement level

Participation is an important component of Louvain Cooperation au Développement's poverty alleviation interventions. The name Louvain Cooperation is by definition participatory in the sense that it implies cooperating with partners in the search for sustainable solutions to their problems. In addition, Louvain Cooperation's mission is oriented towards participatory approaches: "Support initiatives aimed at improving the political, economic and social context, in other words, general well-being" (Louvain Développement "LD", n.d). In stating that the organization endeavors to 'support initiatives…', one could infer local initiatives, which would suggest that high on the organization's agenda is the promotion of self-reliance, self-development, and development collaboration and cooperation mechanisms, three indispensable elements of participation described by Heck (Heck, 2003, p. 8 & 9). On the other hand, one could interpret the approach articulated in the mission statement as emanating from the 'guided organization' tradition. As notes Slayter, development agencies that claim to support local initiatives often in fact execute projects that are largely externally funded and driven. In other words, the projects are planner-centered, and it is largely up to the planner to decide on the level and nature of beneficiary participation (Slayter, 1995, p. 10).

5.1.2. Participation in practice: LIAM project design and implementation

The various methodologies utilized in this case study to gain a better understanding of beneficiary participation in the LIAM project demonstrated that stakeholders, including small-scale farmers, played an active role in project design and are also involved in the implementation and evaluation phases, which suggests that participation is happening at all of Cohen and Uphoff's stages: decision-making, implementation, benefit sharing, and evaluation. Some of the limitations to confirming the level and intensity of beneficiary participation are the long recall period and the low level of education of project beneficiaries. The LIAM project has been underway for over two years, and beneficiaries often have difficulty remembering what happened over three years ago. Notwithstanding the implication of local farmers in LIAM design and implementation, certain gaps in substantive beneficiary participation were identified that pose constraints to the realization of the project objective.

Participation in the context of LIAM can be considered as both as a means and an end of the project. Participation of local small-scale farmers and landless farmers is employed in both project design and implementation phases as a means to achieve the project objective of improving living conditions for rural populations in northern Burundi in a sustainable manner. As such, participatory approaches are used as a strategy to identify local needs, respond to them, and redistribute scare resources among community members. Participation is also an end of the project, given its intended result of strengthening local associations and enhancing the organizational capacity of marginalized farmers to increase their bargaining power and decision-making role in the development of their communities. Below, I will analyze the ways in which beneficiaries have participated and continue to participate in the design and implementation of the LIAM project, with a view to determining the impact of the extent and nature of their participation on project effectiveness and outcomes.

(i). Participation in LIAM project design

This section will examine the application of participatory approaches in four key aspects of the LIAM design process: identification of beneficiary needs, determination of the project's intended results, conception of project strategy, and selection of project activities, with particular attention given to the role of the implementing partner organization, UCODE asbl.

The LIAM project was designed by LD field staff in collaboration with UCODE asbl's technical support branch (AMR) and the farmers' associations that comprise the federation, as detailed in Section II. To gain a better understanding of the LIAM project design process and the role played by local farmers, it is pertinent to examine the structure of UCODE asbl and its influence on the nature and level of farmer participation. UCODE asbl has at its base farmers associations and at the top its management apparatus, meaning the General Assembly and its elected executive committee supported by a Technical branch (AMR). This structuring process starts with individual farmers that organize into small groups around one of the four target crops within an administrative division called a *Colline*. The project staff facilitates the farmers' association to establish a committee and legalize the association. Within a *Commune,* all associations practicing the same sector-based crop come together to create a Communal Union, also called a sector-based Communal Union. Since there are four sector crops, there is maximum four Communal Unions. Within a *Cummune* all four Communal Unions come together to create a structure called a UCODE-Commune, which is a committee of six to seven representatives from the elected executive committees of the sector-based associations. UCODE Communes together comprise UCODE asbl which is an executive committee made up with 15 elected members by UCODE Commune. It worth mentioning as notes UCODE asbl Director, not all the farmer associations started with LIAM or LPPN not even with UCODE asbl. There were a few associations before the creation of UCODE asbl but they needed restructuring and other technical support (LIAM-staff & Project-Staff, personal communication, January 17, 2012).

In theory, a farmers' association is born out of a movement of community members with similar characteristics and needs who, after realizing the benefits of collective action (sometimes with an external promoter), join efforts and create a community-based organization. The movement spreads out organically in the community, leading to the creation of other associations that eventually join to create

Unions, and over time, these unions result in the formation of a Federation. Conversely, as noted by Déogracias Niyonkuru, an independent consultant hired to provide support to UCODE asbl, in his 2007 mission report, "the process here was reversed. A central unit had defined rules and principles, to which local farmers associations have to adhere, with little understanding of the actual rules, let alone the values and certainly did not participate in their definition" (Niyonkuru, 2007, p. 10). Furthermore, the structural model presented in the paragraph above remains largely idealistic, given that UCODE asbl came into being based on a top-down model and the restructuring process initiated by LIAM is still underway. Although UCODE asbl is a Federation, it is not fully participatory in its decision-making processes, thus, it should not be assumed that implication of UCODE asbl in the project design process is a proxy for the substantive implication of local farmers, particularly the most vulnerable. While a project design process that involves a Federation of farmers associations seemingly takes in to account local needs, the top-down structure of UCODE asbl is a complicating factor that potentially impeded true participation at the grassroots level.

Despite UCODE asbl's top-down structure, an examination of LIAM's intended results reveals that farmer participation and empowerment were given high priority in the project design process. The project's global goal and specific objective are, respectively, to improve the living conditions of the population of northern Burundi and to decrease household vulnerability to food insecurity, neither of which expressly imply an intent to increase the organizational capacity of farmer organizations or their active participation in food security interventions. Nevertheless, project result four – "The process of restructuring and strengthening local farmers' associations and the development of agricultural sectors lead to the emergence of two complementary structures: a peasant federation and peasant support structure" – was formulated to identify participation as an unequivocal intention of the LIAM project (Louvain Développement "LD", 2009, p. 49). Result four demonstrates LIAM's aim to empower small-scale farmer organizations and to increase their access to community resources, their bargaining power, and their participation in community decision-making.

Participation was specifically addressed in the project design process with respect to result four, with the goal of facilitating a viable Federation of smallholder farmers that is self-run, self-funded and self-sustaining. A number of project activities were developed to promote this kind of genuine participation, including:

(a) Supporting the formation, the structuring and the legalization of farmers associations;
(b) Supporting the establishment of communal unions as well as their functioning;
(c) Supporting the institutional and operational strengthening of the federation;
(d) Strengthening the capacity of the federation technical support body;
(e) Supporting the literacy program for members of farmers' associations including women (LD-LIAM, 2012).

The literacy program aims to involve women and other smallholder farmers that have long been bypassed in the decision-making of the Federation. Within LIAM, specific activities were planned to target illiterate farming households and encourage their participation in the association committees. The project midterm evaluation drew attention to the proportion of farmers' association members who have completed the literacy program and who have served in the federation decision-making bodies as well as other decision-making groups in their respective communities. The way in which the LIAM project was

designed to promote the empowerment of women and other vulnerable members of the community in the project catchment area scores high on both White and Heck typologies as transformative participation and empowerment, respectively.

To develop project strategies and activities in addition to those related to result four, farmers' associations were involved in needs identification, analysis, and dialogue with the project team to determine context-specific solutions. One of the most favored participatory methods employed by LIAM to engage the community in project decision-making is focus groups with beneficiary association representatives or individual farmers directly, depending on the activity to be undertaken. An illustrative example of how this method was employed in the project design process is the identification of income-generating activities. This involved discussing with beneficiaries to get their input on profitable income generating-activities practiced in the community. Participants listed all potential activities and then, using a comparison matrix with the project team guidance, they selected the most feasible and profitable income-generating activities practiced in the community.

Prior to LIAM, UCODE asbl member associations supported by LD were structured as small self-help groups of peasants who cultivated a piece of land as a group and shared the harvest. Actions developed and activities carried out by these associations were intended to improve social cohesion and the living conditions of members using the communal farm model. With LIAM, the strategy developed to be used by farmers' associations became more market-driven, with the development of sector-based crops grown for sale in addition to domestic consumption. The project developed agricultural sectors, a strategy that involved farmers working individually on their farms but organized in associations that grow the same sector crop. The selected crops for the agricultural sectors are beans, bananas, onions, and rice. Note that LIAM did not introduce the sector-based approach per se, this strategy had been tried by UCODE asbl shortly before the LIAM but it was with the later that the approach became developed and widespread throughout the federation. The uniqueness of LIAM is that, in addition to strengthening the agriculture sector-based approach, it also introduced animal husbandry and environmental protection activities. In addition, the project promotes micro health insurance and microcredit, thus employing a holistic approach to poverty alleviation.

LD internal documents describing the LIAM project's design highlight the participation of local farmers through their association representatives and local leaders in problem identification and analysis, using tools such as the problem tree. These documents stress that local farmers participated in the identification of the four sector crops currently cultivated by UCODE asbl member associations. Similar information was reported to me by the LIAM project team during two separate semi-structured interviews, as well as during an individual interview with the UCODE asbl Director. This use of participation aligns with true participation (genuine participation), where the project strives to respond to locally felt and expressed needs. However, as warns Michener, "where to draw a line between felt needs and needs identified by outsiders is an issue which challenges the participation rhetoric. Many projects seem to start with conscience-raising to convince local people that the concern of the First World and development professionals are also their concerns" (Michener 1998, p. 2111). To put this statement into context, within LIAM, local farmers were given the opportunity to articulate and analyze their needs, but the strategy developed to address these needs appears to have come from the outside. The agriculture sector-based approach is not native to Burundi. This approach had been tried elsewhere, and as a result,

it was ‘sold’ to locals by the implementing organization through an outside consultant. It thus appears that the role of local farmers in the LIAM design process was reduced to adoption of an approach proposed by ‘experts’ and adapting certain elements to the local context (identification of appropriate sector-based crops).

The LIAM design process (identification of needs, intended results, and strategies/activities) was intended to be participatory, in that the process was conducted in collaboration with the local implementing partner, grew out of consultations with farmers’ associations, and aimed to engage farmers in the process of seeking solutions to their problems. Nevertheless, many of the participatory design components are top-down in nature and revolve around farmers’ adoption of the agricultural sector-based approach and improved farming techniques. The participatory nature of the design process seems to not extend much beyond needs appraisal to the conception of project strategy, although farmers were implicated in decision-making regarding project activities. Even though the LIAM project seems highly concerned with farmers’ empowerment, there is clearly a strong inclination toward planner-centered instrumental use of participation in the project design phase. Accordingly, the project scores low on White’s typology as Instrumental participation, where beneficiary’s involvement seems to be used by the implementing agency as a means to achieve project efficiency not much for farmers’ empowerment.

This top-down approach was potentially driven by the local implementing agency’s apparent preference for technical solutions to food insecurity and malnutrition, based upon the assumption that farmers are poor because of their limited technical agricultural knowledge. This argument was well articulated by Niyonkuru as he warns “the first limitation of UCODE’s support is thinking that the only elements that hinder the improvement of the living condition of populations are technical. What this implies is that farmers are poor because they do not master farming techniques, do not know how to manage or cannot write texts or statutes of their associations” (Niyonkuru, 2007, p. 10). With the LIAM project, UCODE has made significant progress attempting to tackle farmers’ poverty issues from a holistic perspective. Nonetheless, it is unfortunate to acknowledge that Niyonkuru’s observation is still relevant today. In my interviews with UCODE asbl and LIAM technical staff, it was repeatedly stated that the role of UCODE asbl was to provide technical support to farmers with little reference to other issues that contribute to farmers’ poor living conditions (LIAM-Staff & Project-Staff, personal communication, January 17, 19, 2012b)

(ii) LIAM project implementation

The LIAM project was designed to be participatory in its implementation. The project was to be implemented by a local NGO formed by a Federation of farmers’ associations, it explicitly intended to strengthen local farmers’ associations and enhance their capacity for collective action, and it gave farmers ‘associations opportunities to provide feedback and reorient project activities to better respond to their changing needs. This section will analyze LIAM’s implementation process and whether it is indeed participatory in character, as intended in its design. It will examine the application of participatory approaches in three key aspects of LIAM’s implementation: the nature of the implementing partnership, monitoring/evaluation, and consistency in the application and understanding of participation, with particular attention given to the role of the local implementing agency, UCODE asbl.

As explained in Section II, the LIAM project has two main programs, each being implemented by a different local nongovernmental organization (UCODE asbl and UCODE-MF). The nature of LD's partnership with these organizations is not a typical international NGO-local NGO partnership; LD is very hands on. This partnership dynamic blurs operational boundaries in project implementation. Practically, LD not only provides, in addition to funding, technical support to its implementing partners through its Technical Support Team (Cellule d'Appui Technique – CAT) of five staff, including the Project Manager, but also plays a role that could be characterized as that of 'co-implementing partner'. Most field activities are usually executed by a team of at least two staff, a technical assistant from LD and his corresponding teammate within the implementing partner organization, and some project activities are led and executed directly by LD technical staff. While this partnership style allows the implementing partners to capitalize on the expertise of LD technical support staff, at the same time, it reinforces a top-down model that does not allow much room for the ownership and technical autonomy that the project is intending to promote. If not properly managed, there is a risk that this partnership style could propagate certain negative aspects of the 'guided organization' approach, or degenerate in to paternalism as Rocheleau cautions, rather than fostering empowerment.

This presents a challenge with relation to the implementation of activities aiming to empower UCODE asbl and its constituent farmers' associations, including:

(a) Supporting the formation, the structuring and the legalization of farmers associations;
(b) Supporting the establishment of communal unions as well as their functioning;
(c) Supporting the institutional and operational strengthening of the federation;
(d) Strengthening the capacity of the federation technical support body; (LD-LIAM, 2012)

Although these activities (also discussed above with reference to intended result four) are important components of participatory approaches and were visibly designed to empower the farmers' Federation, there is a manifest power dimension in the implementation of these activities given the nature of the partnership with LD and the structure of the Federation itself. As noted in the case of LIAM project design, the way in which UCODE asbl functions, makes decisions, and implements project activities is not inherently participative simply by nature of its structure as a Federation of farmers' associations. An important effort must be deployed by UCODE asbl, supported by LD, to ensure that the organization operates according to 'bottom-up' principles if empowerment of farmers is truly a goal. In other words, within this process of empowering UCODE asbl, LD must ensure that the LIAM does not become a vehicle for dependency that fails to help UCODE asbl become autonomous and bottom-up and permits it to remain a simple cadre for the execution of externally-funded projects. LD and UCODE asbl must ensure that empowerment spills over the limits of the LIAM project in order to have a sustainable development impact. In addition, although the above activities are designed to foster empowerment, the overemphasis on expressions such as "supporting" and "strengthening" undertones paternalistic inclination, thus if not properly implemented may reinforce or translate into a top-down model which goes against what the project is trying to promote.

The commitment of LD to integrating local farmer participation in LIAM's implementation is particularly evident in the project's monitoring and evaluation methods. The project emphasizes the active involvement of beneficiaries in data collection, using a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

methodology. Project staff were trained in Results-Oriented Management (ROM), M&E and data collection and treatment with a specific focus on PRA data collection methodology. I took an active part in this process, co-coordinating field data collection using a PRA method and other participatory methods. Similarly, during the mid-term evaluation that I also had the privilege to play an important role in, a great priority was given to participatory approaches, and project beneficiaries were actively involved in assessing multiple aspects of the project. Following the evaluation, a restitution meeting with the project pilot committee, which is a group representing all project key stakeholders, was held to appraise the evaluation results. The reliance on participatory methodologies in project monitoring and evaluation indicates that LD is cognizant of the power dimension and the importance of local knowledge for project success, two critical dimensions of participatory approaches.

While the LIAM project could be classified as transformative according to White's participation typology, the intensity of this participation seems to vary from one activity to another, and the understanding of participation also differs between project staff. Some project staff seem to confuse farmers' participation with a farmer's decision to join a farmer association, or a group of farmers' decision to create a farming association, which is a pre-condition to access the project services. Moreover, there is evidence that within the project, participation is often perceived by staff as a given rather than as a goal to achieve. "Participatory approach is employed in the project given the very nature of UCODE asbl as a federation of peasant associations. We cannot do otherwise because UCODE asbl (the management) does not determine beforehand what it is going to do, that always emanates from the associations. For us, beneficiaries' participation is not an option, it is a constraint" (Project-staff, personal communication, January19, 2012). The danger of such perception is the hindrance of efforts aimed at promoting genuine participation. As a result, the appearance of participation would remain preserved in the project design phase while the project actually adheres to traditional top-down power relations.

In order to avoid the misuse of participation, and to standardize the application of participatory approaches within the project, it becomes imperative to have a written description of the project participatory approach framework and its application. Unfortunately, the LIAM Technical and Financial Document, the main project document describing the project intervention strategy, is not very explicit about the application of a participatory approach in project implementation and evaluation phases. That is not to say that the project is not participatory, but because the details of the participatory approaches to be applied are not codified in the project document, the approach is not standardized across the project implementation process.

There are two main challenges that LIAM has to overcome in order to achieve a greater degree of participation and empowerment of local farmers, which is a result that the project is manifestly striving to achieve. First LIAM must ensure that the Federation is truly adhering to a bottom-up approach and that it is as committed to promoting participation as LD, as well as ensuring that the nature of the partnership with UCODE asbl, is one that facilitates empowerment and autonomy. Second, it must address inconsistencies in the application and understanding of participation by project staff and their impact on farmer participation in project implementation.

In summary, vulnerable farming households may lack resources, but they have a package of indigenous capital that the design of food security projects should not neglect. The role that poor farmers can play in identifying activities and developing strategies that respond to their unique conditions is indispensable. They should participate in the strategic thinking process with the support of project staff to develop specific strategies that they can themselves implement, with the goal of achieving sustainable development for poor smallholder farmers that is not exclusively centered on foreign assistance, the last serving as a push to allow these poorer households to achieve endogenous development.

IV.2. Participation & LIAM targeting (pro-poor?)

Involving beneficiaries in development projects is an approach that has been demonstrated to improve project coverage, including enabling a project to reach the most vulnerable members of a community. Pre-existing groups provide an effective means for extending coverage (Heck, 2003 , p. 10). However, irrespective of a project's reliance on pre-existing groups, it is important to ensure that specific targeting measures are designed to include the very poor, who are often bypassed by the very projects that intend to serve them. In the context of LIAM, farmer groups formation and structuring are two important targeting strategies that have enabled the project to serve a large number of farming households in the project catchment area in a relatively short time period. The project targets 6000 households "belonging to the most vulnerable groups", as specified in intended result one, and within two years of implementation (mid-project), LIAM has gone from serving 11 to 179 farmers' associations comprised of approximately 4882 households in three northern provinces of Burundi (LIAM-staff, personal communication, January19, 2012a). To benefit from project services, a household must voluntarily join an existing farmers' association or create a new association along with other interested farmers as well as adhere to the agricultural sector-based approach promoted by the project. Becoming a member of a farmers' association is thus a pre-condition to accessing project benefits.

This beneficiary identification approach does not favor the most vulnerable farmers in a given community. Rather, it reinforces the challenges that poor farming households face in taking effective part in the development discourse, particularly with respect to playing an active, substantive role in food security interventions. Although the LIAM project emphases targeting "smallholders" and "landless" farmers as the primary beneficiaries of its agricultural interventions– it is unclear that smallholders, let alone landless farmers, strictly defined, have been expressly targeted as project beneficiaries. Regrettably, there are many factors hindering these groups from benefitting from the project, many of which did not start with LIAM design or implementation. LIAM inherited both the beneficiaries of the first project phase (LPPN) as well as all the ills related to targeting. I am not the first person to put a finger on this issue. Several monitoring and evaluation reports, the most recent being the project mid-term evaluation, have pointed to the issue of targeting within the LIAM project. The factors impeding the project from appropriately targeting and serving those farmers most vulnerable to food insecurity can be grouped in four categories: isolation, closed membership, extreme poverty, and the project design contradiction.

Isolation is an important factor limiting the most vulnerable farmers from benefitting from the LIAM project. Very poor farmers are often absent from community social life as well as community decision-making, which decreases their opportunity to access information about the project. In addition, very

poor are less likely to be members of a farmers' association and thus harder to reach. Additionally, although in theory existing farmers' groups have open door membership policies, allowing interested farmers to join any pre-existing association, in practice, these groups are often not open to new members, especially those who are very poor. Membership in farmers' associations is usually family/kinship- and/or interest-based.

Another factor limiting very poor farmers from benefitting from the LIAM project is their financial situation. Although membership is voluntary, it comes with a cost. Whether a potential member joins a pre-existing farmers' group or a new one, he/she has to pay signing fees as well as monthly membership fees to maintain membership status. This disposition makes it difficult or impossible for the most vulnerable farmers to access to the project services, as poverty prevents them from overcoming the financial barriers to farmers' association membership. As one project technical assistant explained "during LPPN, poorer households that managed to become members and maintain their membership status have to do so at the cost of their families; they would sometimes have to sell their agricultural labor to save up for their monthly membership fees" (LIAM-Staff, personal communication, January 17, 2012a).

An additional and perhaps the most important factor precluding the project from serving the most vulnerable farming households is the contradiction between the project design phase and the choice of intervention strategy. The LIAM project hierarchy opted for the agriculture sector-based approach as its intervention strategy. Technically, to adhere to this approach, a household must own at least some arable land, but most vulnerable farmers are landless or near landless and survive by selling agricultural labor. According to Ndayitwayeko D. et Ndorukwigira L., in their food security analysis report that inspired LIAM formulation found that 22.9% of study respondents in the project area are landless farmers, 13.5% of farmers own between 0.05 to 0.1ha; 8.3% own between 0.11 to 0.2ha in land property; 20.8% own between 0.8 to 1ha, and only 14% own more than 1ha (Ndayitwayeko & Ndorukwigira, July 2008, p. 29) The project itself defines vulnerable smallholders as those farming less than 0.2 hectare of land, and thus there is an inherent contradiction in that the project intends to serve the most vulnerable groups while at the same time favoring better off farmers. Although theoretically, there is no landholding minimum required to adhere to the sector-based approach promoted by the project, in reality, landholding seems to be a determinant factor in a farmer's decision to adhere to this approach. Within this approach, project beneficiaries are required to cultivate one crop at a time, a requirement that seems unrealistic and unaffordable for near landless let alone landless farmers. In addition, landless and near landless lack both the resources to access agricultural inputs despite project efforts to facilitate this access and thus may have little incentive to join the project. The choice of this approach if not accompanied by actions that allow landless and near landless farmers to access land, may effectively exclude this category from the project. In Burundi, land scarcity is a major issue facing farmers, hence; this disposition has led to the project benefiting lots of the 'haves' and leaving out the 'have nots' that it is intending to uplift. To complicate matters further, it is not clear that the size of a farmer's landholding or other concrete indicators were initially used to select LIAM project beneficiaries. There are many current beneficiaries of LIAM that farm significantly more than one 0.5 hectare of arable land, as I

learned from the first data from the beneficiary categorization, in triangulation with data from the project mid-term evaluation, personal field observations and conversations with project staff.

To address the multiple factors hindering the LIAM project from effectively engaging in pro-poor targeting, toward the end of its second year, the project started turning things around. In collaboration with the beneficiaries, the project has been designing and implementing mechanisms aiming to target the most vulnerable farmers, with a specific aim of reaching 500 households that can be classified as the most vulnerable in the project catchment area. First, the project has launched a campaign to identify and categorize all the current project beneficiaries based on their level of vulnerability, which is determined using a set of criteria developed by project staff in collaboration with local farmers. This campaign is still underway, but the project was able to orient its annual planning for the year 2013 based on the first results. While measuring the vulnerability of project beneficiaries is essential, this categorization process is not free from major biases, in that beneficiaries are asked to self report information about their socio-economic status, based on which they are classified in one of three vulnerability categories, with little triangulation to verify the accuracy of the information provided. This is a common mistake long observed in development projects. Dichter rebukes development practitioners for treating the poor as saints and thus failing to recognize their egocentric character. Project staff tend to "listen [to] beneficiaries far too gullibly and without any inkling that the poor can be just as self-serving as other human beings" (as cited in Michener 1998, p.2113, 2114).

The second strategy developed by LIAM to better target the most vulnerable farmers is the definition of a set of vulnerability criteria based upon which households self classify themselves; the larger community subsequently validates the households' self vulnerability assessment. The third approach consists of identifying the most vulnerable households through existing institutions such as nutritional centers. In collaboration with nutritional centers, the project identifies families that have children that were recently discharged from these centers or families that have children suffering from malnutrition and still undergoing treatment. The project is now in the process of implementing its vulnerability based- approach. A number of activities that suite the unique needs of these households have been included in the project planning for year 2013. The project mid-term evaluation carried out at this end of 2011 has also recommended to the project to encourage these very poor households to form new farmers' associations given the uniqueness of their needs. This evaluation stressed that they should not be encouraged or forced to join existing associations.

It is clear that LIAM did not initially capitalize on farmers' participation to reach down to the most vulnerable. Had the participation of local farmers been more appropriately and substantively exploited, project design and implementation would have been more effective, allowing LIAM to more fully realize its aim of increasing and diversifying agricultural production in favor of those farming households most vulnerable to food insecurity. Nevertheless, there is palpable evidence that the project is learning from its past errors and currently making strides to include the most vulnerable farmers in the project. The above identification strategies are an illustrative example. Furthermore, representatives of the most vulnerable farmers, both current beneficiaries and non beneficiaries, were involved in the project mid-term evaluation and baseline data collection workshops. As a result of this participation, this population group offered their input on activities that can potentially help them move out of extreme poverty. The project has capitalized on this local knowledge by taking these suggestions and translating

them into a set of activities that takes into account the particular conditions of very poor farming families.

The inclusion of the poorest farming households in LIAM's mid-term evaluation and data collection workshops should be viewed as the beginning of a long process of participation. Without romanticizing the benefits of beneficiary participation, I believe that the project can go even further by involving the already-identified poor in the continuous process of reaching out to very poor households. Moreover, the project need not stop at the identification phase but should also update its vulnerability-based approach by encouraging the creation of new associations for the most vulnerable farmers. As suggested in the project mid-term evaluation, specific activities that address the unique needs of this category should be given first priority in the remaining two years of the project life (VLAENDEREN, 2012, p. 17). In addition, further workshops should be organized to give the poorest families an opportunity to participate in the strategic planning of the interventions that address their families' specific poverty issues. Lastly and most importantly, potential beneficiaries, in this case, the very poor, have to take an active part in decision-making processes in all project phases, particularly with respect to beneficiary targeting. A project cannot effectively target the very poor if they are excluded from project design, implementation, and evaluation. In the conclusion section, I offer a set of guidelines adapted from those developed by Carlos A. Perez's for pro-poor targeting.

V.3. Participation, responsiveness to beneficiary needs, and sustainability in the LIAM project

5.3.1. Participation and LIAM's responsiveness to beneficiary needs

There is ample evidence that when beneficiaries are actively and substantially involved in a development project, they influence its design to make it more responsive to their most pressing needs. In addition, it has been shown that involving beneficiaries in the project implementation phase as well as project decision-making processes allows built-in-flexibility that boosts the project's ability to respond effectively and in a timely fashion to beneficiaries changing needs and aspirations. As such, beneficiary participation can be considered a pre-condition for development project success – defined, in this case, as a project that responds effectively to beneficiary needs–regardless of the nature of that participation (means or end). With respect to the ways and extent to which beneficiary needs are taken in to account in LIAM's design and implementation phases, details are provided in Section 5.1.1. "Participation in practice: LIAM project design and implementation". This section serves to briefly analyze how beneficiary participation impacts the effectiveness of LIAM's design and implementation, as measured by the project's responsiveness to beneficiary needs.

The LIAM design process, as described in project documents and expressed by project staff during interviews, actively involved beneficiaries in problem identification and analysis as well as needs identification and assessment. LIAM's design was guided by the input of local farmers, and accordingly, intended project results were based on farmers' problems and the solutions that they themselves proposed. As one project staff reported during a focus group, each of the project results addresses a specific problem and need expressed by farmers. In other words, the LIAM project is diverse in nature because of the diversity of the problems expressed by local farmers, which resulted in the adoption of a holistic approach to poverty that intends to effectively tackle their various needs.

As was the case for LIAM's design phase, they ways in which farmers participate in project implementation also render the project more responsive to their needs. For the sake of this paper, I have identified three key ways in which farmers participate in project implementation that directly impact the project's responsiveness to their needs. The first is through UCODE asbl decision-making bodies, such as the Federation General Assembly, Communal Union meetings, and farmers' association meetings. Recommendations from these gatherings are forwarded to the LIAM project at different levels, depending on the level at which the recommendations are formulated. The second channel through which farmers participate in LIAM's implementation is the ongoing monitoring visits carried out by project staff, the monitoring and evaluation technical assistant, as well as the project piloting committee. The third and the most influential channel is the project evaluation. LIAM has adopted a participatory evaluation approach, which strives to include the project beneficiaries in the evaluation phase. For instance, during the project recent midterm evaluation, households were actively involved through PRA methods, Semi Structured Interviews (SSI) and focus groups, meetings with farmers' representatives, meeting with government local officials, etc.

These different avenues for farmer participation in LIAM's implementation positively influence the project's responsiveness to beneficiary needs. They allow project staff to identify obstacles to project success and gather beneficiaries' input on potential solutions to help the project achieve the desired outcomes, although it is difficult to measure the actual impact of collected farmers' inputs on project orientation given the lack of built-in flexibility that characterized the first phase (first year) of the LIAM project. That is to say that, in its first year, LIAM was operating with a Project Logical Framework model that does not leave enough room for adaptation during the project implementation. But entering in its third year, the project has adopted a ROM approach, which is by definition a less rigid model, with built-in-flexibility, susceptible to adaptations given the changing needs and situation of beneficiaries. The information collected during the mid-term evaluation not only allowed the project team to assess the effectiveness of the project, it also helped inform future planning based on expressed community needs and resources. At the same time, impediments to full farmer participation in project design and implementation – including limited participation in strategy elaboration, the top-down structure of UCODE asbl, the nature of the implementing partnership, and inconsistency in the application and comprehension of participatory approaches – diminish the project's responsiveness to beneficiary needs, and thus its effectiveness in the sense that by failing to capitalize on local knowledge and realities, the project fail to continually inform its strategy for context-specific solution, project ownership and project sustainability. In the following paragraph, I will analyze in greater detail the role of participation and the sustainability of LIAM.

5.3.2. Participation and the sustainability of LIAM

Sustainable development is a paradigm that has evolved over the last two decades, and it has been defined and interpreted differently by various entities and actors. The most popular and widely-accepted definition of this term is the one found in *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland report, which defines sustainable development as "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987). Regrettably, despite the popularization of this concept in food security discourse and practice, the number of the world's poor and hungry is still on the rise. This is to say that sustainable development theories as

applied to food security have not translated into the expected results on the ground. As noted by John Drexhage and Deborah Murphy: “The concept and idea of sustainable development is widely accepted, and good progress has been made on sustainable development metrics; yet the implementation of sustainable development has been largely unsuccessful” (Drexhage & Murphy, September 2010, p. 12).

Specifically with reference to food security projects, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) defines sustainability as “ensuring that the institutions supported through projects and the benefits realized remain and continue after the project end…” (Tango International, 2009, p. 8). IFAD has identified four dimensions that must be taken into account in order to ensure project suitability: Institutional sustainability, which aims to strengthen existing institutions so that they can deliver the same service after the project; household and community resilience; environmental sustainability; and lastly, structural change, meaning empowering the poor to address structural dimensions of their poverty (Tango International, 2009, pp. 8-9). Similar to IFAD, the American Indian Development Associates (AIDA), considers sustainability as “maintaining and continuing the program services after the funding period is over. It means having needed services become a permanent part of the community’s resources. It also means that new programs and projects are only part of the changing and evolving community system” (AIDA, 2001). In other words, project sustainability means maintaining the products and outcomes of a project, in line with its original goals, and institutionalizing the process of development within a given community. It does not mean maintaining the project staff or the project as it was designed and does not depend on grant funding.

There is a clear causal relationship between participation and sustainable development. Beneficiary involvement in development projects is a crucial building block of project sustainability, one that must be integrated in to all project phases – from needs identification to project design, implementation to evaluation – to achieve this end. As expressed by IFAD, sustainable outcomes depend upon participation. Participatory approaches make sustainable development possible, by empowering the poor through strengthening existing or new groups to enable their participation in decision-making so as to ensure an equitable share and flow of community resources. The goal of sustainable development is synonymous with the global objective of the LIAM project: to improve the well-being of individuals and the larger community over the long term. Accordingly, achieving this goal is only possible if those concerned (in the case of LIAM, farmers) actively and substantively participate in projects initiated to promote the development of their communities.

To contextualize sustainability within the LIAM project, this section briefly analyzes the impact of local farmers’ participation in LIAM’s design and implementation phases on project sustainability. The project manual documents the process through which beneficiaries were involved in the project design, including needs assessment, analysis of food security issues, and proposition of potential solutions and practical actions to be undertaken (Louvain Développement "LD", 2009, p.50). In addition, a number of risks that could potentially hinder the project’s sustainability were identified and a mitigation plan was put in place. (Louvain Développement "LD", 2009, p.125). However, the project document is not explicit on the role played by local farmers in the identification of these risks as well as their mitigation plan. That is not to say that beneficiaries did not collaborate to the identification of these risks. In the recent midterm project evaluation and baseline data collection workshops, farmers were asked to provide the various problems that negatively impacted their poor agricultural production and/or market

accessibility issues among other factors. The project recently reinforced its risk assessment and mitigation plan by implementing a risk management tool called risk analysis and management matrix based on information collected during these workshops. This tool serves as a sounding alarm to alert the project staff of a potential risk to project sustainability in order to take necessary measures. Project sustainability is favored by the high level of farmer participation in LIAM's design process. A project designed in collaboration with representatives of the population it intends to serve is more likely to inspire ownership and thus more likely to be sustained by its beneficiaries even after its timeframe expires.

Institutional sustainability is a critical dimension of project sustainability, as presented by IFAD. Thus a key challenge remaining for LIAM is that of ensuring that UCODE asbl continues delivering the same services to its member associations even after the end of the project. The design of LIAM specifically addresses this issue. Project result number four is dedicated to institutional sustainability, including the development and implementation of economic activities that would allow the Federation to be financially self-sustaining. With this result, the project aims to leave behind a powerful peasant federation along with a technical support branch that will continue providing services to the project beneficiaries. It is clear that the sustainability of LIAM is heavily dependent on the success of this result, unfortunately, access to market still a serious issue facing LIAM beneficiaries. The project has to deploy important efforts to develop this important aspect of the food chain.

LIAM is designed to empower farmers by strengthening their capacities to organize and act collectively, and thus sustainability is built in to the project design. Yet in order for this sustainability to become a reality, farmers must participate actively in project implementation through their associations and the Federation. In order for the Federation, and thus the outcomes of the LIAM project itself, to be sustainable, farmers must feel heard and represented. Their participation in decision-making should be encouraged for buy-in and project ownership, two building blocks of sustainability that can only be promoted through participation. In the process of strengthening local organizations, the role of project staff should be simply that of facilitators and capacity-builders.

The LIAM project has put in place a range of measures to assure project sustainability, many of which evolved out of local farmers' participation in its design and implementation. Nevertheless, aspects of LIAM in which farmers' participation is limited could endanger project sustainability. The limited participation of farmers in determining the project strategy presents particular challenges relative to assuring sustainable benefits for the poorest farmers, as discussed in the targeting section. Furthermore, the top-down structure of UCODE asbl and the nature of its partnership with LD can also potentially impede the institutional strengthening and empowerment necessary to assuring the sustainability of LIAM's outcomes. Evidently, it is clear that the success of the LIAM sustainability is heavily dependent on the success of this result which is about participation and empowerment.

5.3.3. Participation and capacity building in the LIAM project

Capacity building and knowledge transfer are important aspects of any development project's success and building blocks for project sustainability. For capacity building to be effective, active participation of the people whose skills will be enhanced is an indispensable component of any project's design and

implementation processes. Farmers are more responsive to new technology when they participate actively in the process of identifying training needs and contribute to the strategic planning of capacity building such as the scope, methodology, etc. In addition, farmers should not be perceived as a homogeneous group, with the same technological package and farming knowledge. Within the same farming community, there are experienced and non experienced farmers; hence, they adopt technological and methodological knowledge at various speeds. These differences are best understood by involving farmers in planning and execution of capacity building activities; if not taken into account, skills transfer and capacity building will most likely be unsuccessful. Active involvement of those to be empowered is thus critical not only to help the project identify capacity building needs but also to tailor methodological approaches that are appropriate to different groups of farmers.

A desk review of internal documents and interviews with LIAM project staff demonstrate that one of the main components of LIAM's project activities is capacity building. Through UCODE asbl, the project accompanies and provides a technical package to farmers that includes, farming techniques, structuring farmers' associations, farmers' association management, etc. LIAM and UCODE asbl staff maintained in interviews that the adoption of the technological package has been successful where the project took into consideration the various training needs and methodology favored by the beneficiaries – such as training venue, approach (theoretical versus practical), on-site versus off-site, etc. – and also adapted the training conducted to the level and practical requirement of each farmers. Note that the participation of farmers in project design and implementation enabled LIAM to identify these factors that otherwise could have rendered capacity building and technology transfer unsuccessful. The project has adopted a participatory approach called *endogenous animators* or *farmer to farmer training* to ensure capacity building and skills transfer. This approach consists of training interested and motivated farmers in improved agricultural techniques and others practices that the project intends to promote. These trained farmers than serve as models in the community to inspire other farmers. In addition, the project organizes exchange visits, to allow farmers to exchange experiences among associations in the region. The project field staff play a support role to these endogenous animators.

VI. CONCLUSION

The state of food security in sub-Saharan African and Burundi in particular is still critical despite NGOs and the Government of Burundi' s efforts to increase access to food. According to the statistics from the WFP 2011, only 28 percent of Burundians are food-secure" and roughly 60 percent are chronically malnourished. The country's national annual food deficits range from 350,000 to over 500,000 metric tons" (WFP, 2011. para 1). Some of the main causes of this food insecurity as cited in LD report are, limited access to farmland, lack of agricultural inputs (fertilizer, seeds, equipments), lack of training in improved farming techniques, inadequate markets and marketing facilities, including lack of reliable market outlets, limited access to credit, heavy dependence on one source of income (agriculture), etc. (as cited in Louvain Développement -LD, 2009, p. 38). In the search for effective, sustainable food security solutions, many food security actors have come to a consensus that smallholder farmers have an essential role to play in this process not only because they make up a large number of those considered 'food insecure', but also and more importantly because they are one of the indispensable food security stakeholders. Unfortunately, notwithstanding the progress observed in the adoption of participatory approaches in food security programs, allegations persist that NGOs still impose their project on their

beneficiaries. NGOs are accused of failing to effectively involve beneficiaries in all food security programming and thus fail to capitalize on their experience and indigenous capital to continually inform food security strategies.

In this case study, I sought to uncover the potential gaps in the application of the principle of participation in food security projects, focusing on the specific case of LIAM. Using a variety of qualitative methods, the study attempted to answer the following question: How does the participation of local farmers impact the effectiveness of the design and implementation of food security projects? Specifically: (1) what is the level and nature of local farmer participation in food security projects in general and in LD/LIAM in particular? (2) What is the influence of local farmers' participation on LIAM project targeting (pro-poor)? (3) How has beneficiary participation influenced the responsiveness of the LIAM project to their needs as well as lay the ground for project sustainability? (4) How has involving local farmers influenced the success of capacity building and skills transfer within the LIAM project?. By carefully analyzing the above sub-questions, this case study sought to develop a greater understanding of the nature and level of local farmers 'participation in the context of LIAM and examine how beneficiary participation influences the effectiveness of food security project design and implementation. This analysis and the findings of this study bring a context specific perspective and understanding of the importance of local participation to the success of LD's food security program in northern Burundi provinces, and thus contribute to the promotion of participatory approach to food security issues in addition to adding to the growing body of literature of best practices on how to effectively design and implement food security projects that lead to the desired outcomes for beneficiaries.

In this Master Paper, I have documented various forms through which NGOs bring participation into practice in development in general and food security projects in particular. I have also explained factors that influence NGOs' choice of a specific participatory approach, and the types and levels of beneficiary participation that these approaches imply. Specifically, focusing on the LIAM project, I have presented both positive and negative findings in regard to the ways in which participation is brought into practice by and within the project.

This case study has demonstrated the ways in which LIAM has made positive use of small-scale farmer participation to enable the project to effectively respond to farmers expressed needs and thereby achieve project objectives. The project document and personal interviews with project staff stressed that beneficiaries were actively involved in the project needs identification, project activities. In addition to using farmers' participation as a means to achieve project objectives, I have also documented how participation is in itself an end goal of the LIAM project. Accordingly, LIAM has made good use of beneficiary participation in respect to project results elaboration by identifying participation as an explicit end of the project and designing a number of activities that aim to empower local farmers. Thus, LIAM's participation standard scored high on both White and Heck typologies, according to which the project could be classified, respectively, as transformative and empowerment. The study also found evidence of how farmer participation has contributed to the effectiveness of both the design and implementation phases of the LIAM project. Specifically, showing how involving farmers has enabled LIAM to better respond to their changing needs, capitalize on their indigenous capital, adapt skills and

technology transfer methodologies, promote project ownership and lay the ground for project sustainability.

This case study also documents some mishandling and missed opportunities in regard to beneficiary participation, revealing evidence of how the LIAM project initially failed to capitalize on farmers' participation to reach down to the very poor members of the community in the project catchment area. It was also found that beneficiary participation was limited in terms of development of project strategy (sector-based approach). Their participation seems limited to the identification of sector-based crops not the overall intervention strategy.

The study was also found that although the project scored high oh Heck and White' typologies respectively as empowering and transformative, the study found that grassroots participation (particularly of poorest farmers) is limited by top down structure of UCODE. Moreover, the implementing partnership is a potential impediment to empowering UCODE asbl and its constituent farmers' associations in a sense that the hands-on partnership style may potentially reinforces a top-down model that does not allow much room for the ownership and technical autonomy that the project is intending to promote. Also if this partnership is not properly managed, there is a risk that it could propagate certain negative aspects of the 'guided organization' approach, or degenerate in to paternalism. Additionally, although the project activities are participatory in both their design, and implementation and even in their evaluation, many activities under result four that are specifically designed to empower UCODE asbl undertone paternalistic connotations. This increases the already existing chance of LIAM being another vehicle for dependency mentality if necessary measures are not urgently put in place to increase UCODE asbl's capacity to mobilize resources locally in order to maintain the benefits of the project after the project life. Furthermore, despite this high score, the study found that the project lack consistency in both the application and understanding of participatory approaches.

The findings presented in this case study have enabled me to answer my development question "How does the participation of local farmers impact the effectiveness of the design and implementation of food security projects?" They confirm my hypothesis, according to which the active and substantive involvement of small-scale farmers in food security projects has a positive impact on project design and implementation. In addition, through this case study and my practicum, I was able to achieve two of my learning objectives which were: Analyze the impact that the participation of local farmers has on the effectiveness of the design and implementation of food security projects, and uncover the potential gaps in the application of the principle of participation in food security projects, focusing on the specific case of LIAM project in northern Burundi. Secondly, through this Master paper and my practicum, I sought to enhance my skills in data collection and treatment, as well as monitoring and evaluation. My third learning objective which was not fully achieved and thus not analyzed in this paper due to time constraint was an analysis of partnership and collaboration dynamics among development actors involved in food security issues in the South.

Recommendations

To help the project overcome the challenges involved in the application of participatory approach to food security and help fill some of the gaps observed in the ways participation is translated into practice in the project, I offer a set of recommendation adapted from suggested by Heck.

a) Strategies to promote small-scale farmer participation

(i). Sensitization of policy makers and promotion of policy dialogue : Politicians at the government, regional and local levels, traditional and influential leaders, and other key decision makers all must be sensitized regarding the critical role that small-scale farmers should play in the design and implementation of food security policies, plans, and projects/programs. The goal of this sensitization is to advocate for the substantial participation of small-scale farmers in food security interventions and for key stakeholders to become willing and motivated to work with small-scale farmers as partners (Heck, 2003 , p. 14 &15). In other words, a dialogue must be encouraged among decision-makers such as key officials, planners and representatives of national and international NGOs both at country and regional levels. Other key players such as development banks, microfinance institutions, local universities and donors should also be included in food security dialogues. The ultimate goal of these dialogues is to encourage the design of food security and rural development policies that fit the needs and aspirations of the rural poor and small-scale farmers and that promote their active participation in these processes.

(ii). Promoting participation in the planning and implementation of food security projects: In the majority of food security projects, participation has been and is still regarded as a strategy to achieve the project objectives, not as an objective in itself. This lack of understanding of participation and its many benefits is observed in most donor and implementing organizations, funding institutions and government agencies. To achieve full participation of small-scale farmers in food security projects, participation must be included in the project objective(s) and effectively translated into project activities. In addition, participatory tools such as participatory needs assessments, participatory training, and participatory monitoring and evaluation must be adopted in the project management approach (Heck, 2003 , p. 15).

(iii). Capacity building: An NGO may have the will to fully involve small-scale farmers in a food security project but lack the important expertise and knowledge in participatory approaches. It thus becomes critical to identify training needs and gaps among project staff with regard to participatory approaches, given that applying participatory approaches to development requires special skills and qualifications. Project staff should receive technical training on the various tools and methodologies employed in participatory projects in order to achieve full beneficiary participation without developing paternalistic relations with the beneficiaries that a project is aiming to empower.

b) Guidelines for pro-poor targeting

Below, I offer a set of guidelines adapted from those developed by Carlos A. Perez (n.d) that should be followed by any development project intending to target the poorest, most vulnerable members of a given community. Adhering to these guidelines will allow a project to more effectively target and serve this population group as well as to maximize its active participation in all project phases, with the

ultimate aim of empowering the very poor to take an active and effective role in the development of their communities. The guidelines are as follows:

- Project activities should be designed with built-in flexibility
- Project activities should be based on locally available resources and respond to a specific demand
- Project implementation and operational strategy must make sense to poor farmers
- Project activities must disaggregate socioeconomic groups and level of knowledge of the most vulnerable farming households and avoid clustering them in one homogeneous group
- Project activities should be designed in such a way that they encourage and promote self-reliance and not reinforce dependency mentality
- Project beneficiaries must continually be involved in the decision-making process so that they can inform the project of their changing needs and conditions
- The project should be more proactive in its beneficiary identification by going toward the poor and not the other way around

In conclusion, the findings of this study show that the participatory nature of the LIAM design process seems to not extend much beyond needs appraisal during the conception of project strategy, although farmers were implicated in decision-making regarding project activities. Even though the LIAM project seems highly concerned with farmers' empowerment, there is clearly a strong inclination toward planner-centered instrumental use of participation in the project design phase. Accordingly, the project scores low on White's typology as Instrumental participation in the design phase where beneficiary's involvement seems to be used by the implementing agency as a means to achieve project efficiency not much for farmers' empowerment. However, after analyzing the overall application of participation principle within the LIAM project, LIAM's participation standard scores high on both White and Heck typologies, according to which the project could be classified, respectively, as transformative and empowerment.

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