THE PHENOMENON OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROJECTS FOSTERED BY THE INGO FIELD OF HOPE IN NORTHERN UGANDA

By

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Abstract: As poverty remains an issue on a global scale, women across the world continue to be the more marginalized gender. Numerous studies support the role of improved agricultural practices in reducing poverty. A majority of the agricultural labor in lesser developed countries is provided by smallholder women farmers (SHWFs). The United Nations prioritized gender equality and women's empowerment in both the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030), and encouraged national governments and other actors, such as International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), to do the same.

However, little qualitative research has been done to study the effectiveness of INGOs regarding women's empowerment through improvements in their agricultural practices, as well as creating access to microfinance opportunities. This phenomenological study was conducted to develop a *deeper understanding* of the *lived experiences* of participants in an INGO's women's empowerment program. The study's theoretical perspective included both critical and feminist theories. Twelve SHWFs, beneficiaries of the INGO Field of Hope's projects in northern Uganda, volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews during August of 2017. Following the interviews, their responses were coded and analyzed to develop five themes and 11 subthemes to understand their experiences and distill the phenomenon's *essence*.

The emergent themes were *securing children's futures through education* (one subtheme)*; empowerment and improved livelihoods as a result of INGO participation* (five subthemes)*; further aspirations for improved quality of life* (two subthemes)*; ongoing challenges* (three subthemes)*;* and *fear of abandonment by the INGO.* The themes were coalesced to create the *essence* of this phenomenon: *Women participants of projects fostered by the NGO Field of Hope in Uganda, although feeling empowered based on increased perceptions of self-esteem, gender equity, sense of community, agricultural knowledge, and economic improvement, still faced ongoing challenges and aspired to further improve their livelihoods.*

It is recommended that further research be conducted to assess which INGO practices encourage empowerment over dependency. It is also recommended that investigations occur on whether empowerment projects increase SHWFs' agricultural productivity. INGOs should assume a participatory approach when creating their strategic plans, and network with other development agencies to further assist and empower beneficiaries.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One in every nine persons suffers from poverty and undernourishment (World Hunger Education Services, 2016). A majority of this population includes women and those citizens who reside in rural areas of lesser-developed countries (LDCs). With 50 years of a global battle against poverty and hunger once led by the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) [see Appendix A] and now by its Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) [see Appendix B], more countries are beginning to focus on empowering their impoverished citizens through a focus on developmental entrepreneurship. By empowering the rural women in these LDCs, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), are striving to stimulate the economies of such nations.

From 2014 to 2016, it was estimated that 896 million people in the world were living on less than $1.90 a day (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2016). In 2010, only two regions accounted for two-thirds of the world's most endemic poverty: Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and South Asia, including India. Moreover, the number of poverty-stricken people of SSA has doubled since 1981 (The World Bank, 2013), which can be partially attributed to an increase in population growth overall.

The prevalence of these statistics in the rural areas of the world are even more staggering. Seventy percent of the world's poorest people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood, and about one-half of those suffering from hunger include farming families (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2014; Olinto, Beegle, Sobrado, & Uematsu, 2013). In addition, rural areas account for every three of four people who live on less than $1 per day (Watkins, 2007).

> The typical Base-of-the-Pyramid [citizen] lives in a remote rural village, in a cramped hut with no clean running water, electricity, or indoor toilet . . . typically illiterate . . . has no savings or access to affordable credit, and is dangerously vulnerable at any moment to disease, injury, or natural disaster. (Cheng, 2014, para. 3)

Along with a strong prevalence in the world's rural areas, poverty is more common among women. Two-thirds of the world's illiterate population are women, and more than 1.3 billion women do not have a formal banking account. Although sexism has greatly declined in many developed countries, the cultural norms for other nations still include a mindset of permissive gender discrimination and inequality. Only from 3.0 to 20.0% of landholders on a global scale are women (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2017), and only 26.8%, or about one-quarter, of girls in LDCs enroll in secondary education (The ONE Campaign, 2015).

Empowering Rural Women

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an increase of women in the labor force results in faster economic growth (OECD Council, 2012). Agricultural outputs of developing countries would rise from 2.5

to 4.0% if women had equal rights in the labor forces of their nations, and this increase would result in 150 million fewer hungry people on the planet (USAID, 2015; World Economic Forum & FAO, 2013). Because of these reasons and others, the United Nations established 17 new development goals in 2015, titled the *Sustainable Development Goals* (see Appendix B). Of these 17 development priorities for the world to achieve by 2030, poverty, hunger, gender equality, and innovation all rank among the top 10 aims (United Nations, 2015).

Because agriculture is the single largest employer in the world, stimulating this sector, and the 40% of the global population it employs, would have substantial benefits (United Nations, 2015). Therefore, growth in the agricultural and allied sectors of the SSA region (see Figure 1) is 11 times more effective at reducing poverty than increases in other industries, and twice as effective than in other regions of the world (The ONE Campaign, 2015).

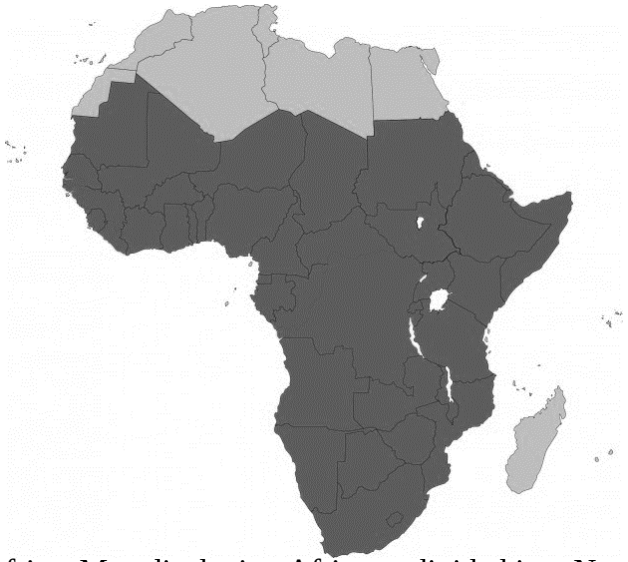

Figure 1. Regions of Africa. Map displaying Africa as divided into North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa (darkest portion), Madagascar, and other Island Nations. (McDubus, 2017)

Problem Statement

Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described a day in the life of a rural woman farmer in a LDC:

> She lives in a rural village and farms a piece of land that she does not own. She rises before dawn and walks miles to collect water – if there is water to be found. She raises enough to feed her family – and maybe has some left over to sell. (Clinton, 2009, para. 8)

This picture rings true across SSA, where women make up more than 50% of the labor force in agriculture but only own approximately 20% of the land (FAO, 2014). They also suffer from limited access to inputs, including seed, credit, extension services, and other resources in comparison to men, which negatively impacts their ability to produce food and thrive economically (FAO, 2014). In response to these conditions, many NGOs have been created with the mission of easing the struggles of women farmers in SSA. The Field of Hope organization, an INGO, was founded for a similar reason, and focuses on the northern region of Uganda (see Figure 2). Their official mission reads:

> We build a bridge across the knowledge gap by training on modern farming practices and setting up demonstrations to prove results. We partner with existing organizations targeting smallholder farmers and orphans to help them become more self-sustaining. We introduce and support mechanization initiatives because we understand the relationship between farm power and productivity. We encourage irrigation solutions because we understand the importance of water.

We believe agriculture can have a direct impact on people's lives because it has had a meaningful impact on ours. (Field of Hope Organization, 2017, para. 1)

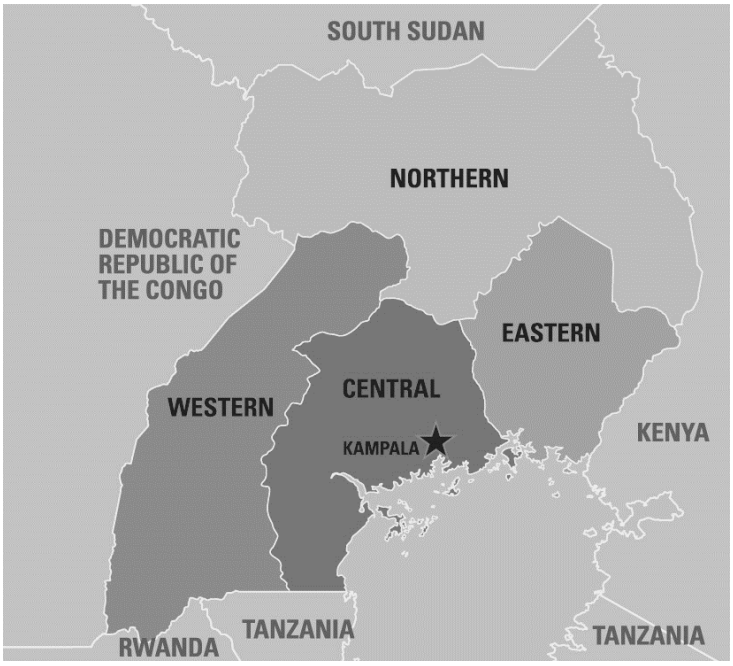

Figure 2. Regions of Uganda (Hitchen, 2016).

With an emphasis on women's empowerment being relatively new to the international development scene, scant literature exists to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of INGOs operating in this sphere. Though some of the existing literature prescribed good practices, little research has been conducted to understand the experiences of the beneficiaries themselves, i.e., the women. These conditions led the researcher to conduct this study employing methods described by Tracy (2010) who asserted that "good qualitative research" stands to be "relevant, timely, significant, interesting, or evocative" (p. 840).

The researcher aimed to identify thematic links in activities facilitated by an INGO and the empowerment of women in regard to their agricultural endeavors and related impacts on their lives. To support INGOs dedicated to improving the livelihoods

of smallholder farmers in Africa, especially women, a deeper understanding of the beneficiaries' perceived personal needs, as well as the effectiveness of Field of Hope's existing practices, was needed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and derive meaning from the shared experiences of women who had participated in empowerment training programs in Uganda, including related agro-entrepreneurship opportunities, through a phenomenological research approach. In addition, the study sought to examine the impact of these opportunities in regard to improving the livelihoods of the participants and others in their communities.

According to Moustakas (1994), an investigator who conducts a phenomenological study "abstains from making suppositions, focuses on a specific topic freshly and naively, constructs a question or problem to guide the study, and derives findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection" (p. 47). The intent of this study, therefore, was to execute a *fresh and naïve* look into women's empowerment, as facilitated by an INGO, and to encourage further research in and reflection on the phenomenon. The *question* or *problem* guiding this study was operationalized as three research objectives:

Objectives

1. Describe the participants' experiences with regard to women's empowerment opportunities provided by an INGO in northern Uganda;
2. Examine the participants' perceptions of the INGO and impact of its empowerment opportunities on women and their respective communities;

3. Distill the *essence* of the participants' *lived experiences* in regard to their interactions with the INGO.

Scope and Limitations

1. The scope of this study was limited to smallholder farmers working with the Field of Hope organization in northern Uganda, including 40 women from four districts surrounding Lira town during the summer of 2017.
2. The findings and conclusions of this inquiry are limited to the qualitative analysis and interpretation of the researcher because she was the primary instrument for data collection.
3. The interpretation of the women's answers to the researcher's questions, and the themes derived from such, were limited to the accuracy of the translation of the study's interviews, as provided by a translator. Most of the women interviewed were not fluent in the researcher's language, English, and answered interview questions in their local or indigenous language.

Assumptions

1. The researcher assumed the women interviewed were honest and forthcoming in their responses to her questions.
2. The researcher assumed that *key informants* used to suggest interview participants were knowledgeable about the women and the INGO's projects, and were fair and honest in their recommendations.
3. The researcher assumed the women were not intimidated by the presence of a male translator/interpreter or in any way less than candid and forthcoming in their answers during the interviews.

Definitions of Terms

Beneficiaries: Beneficiaries are those who benefit from programs or projects, in this case the smallholder women farmers of four districts in Uganda (Apac, Alebtong, Amolatar, and Dokolo) who were involved in Field of Hope's women's groups.

Cooperative: A cooperative is "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise" (ILO Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, as cited in Majurin, 2012, p. 1). Cooperatives are making a revival in East Africa to aid in providing their members needed services, such as microfinancing, agricultural collaboration, and entrepreneurship (Majurin, 2012).

Developmental entrepreneurship: An "economic theory of social entrepreneurship that focuses on entrepreneurial activity occurring at the nexus of the three scholarly domains . . . business entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, and institutional entrepreneurship" (McMullen, 2010, p. 186). Development entrepreneurship aims to help lift communities and individuals out of poverty through entrepreneurial practices.

Empowerment: Empowerment has many different meanings depending on the referenced literature, and can be interpreted differently at an individual level. For this study, we refer to Rappaport's definition: "a process by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over issues of concern to them" (as cited in Zimmerman, 1995, p. 581). Empowerment also can be seen as a developmental process that works to instill self-esteem and self-confidence in individuals to aid them

in decision-making and skills needed to function in an organization or community (Momsen, 2004).

Entrepreneurship: According to Onuoha, entrepreneurship "is the practice of starting new organizations or revitalizing mature organizations, particularly new businesses generally in response to identified opportunities" (as cited in Eroglu & Picak, 2011, p. 146).

Gender: "the socially acquired notions of masculinity and femininity by which women and men are identified" (Momsen, 2004, p. 2).

Gender equality: "equality of opportunity and a society in which women and men are able to lead equally fulfilling lives" (Momsen, 2004, p. 8).

Microfinance: "Microfinance is the provision of financial services to low-income, poor, and very poor self-employed people" (Otero, 1999, p. 9).

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Eight goals set by the United Nations in an attempt to "meet the needs of the world's poorest" that ranged from "halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015" (United Nations, 2013, para. 1; see Appendix A).

Non-governmental organization (NGO): Between the private and public sector in business lies a third *voluntary* sector identified as non-governmental organizations (Uphoff, 1993). Uphoff (1993) further defined this sector as a "channel for promoting economic and social development, also contributing to democratization of the economy, society, and polity" (p. 618). An ***International Non-Governmental***

Organization (INGO) is one in which the main focus or mission emphasizes international work, defined by Boli and Thomas (1997) as

> more or less authoritative *transnational bodies* [emphasis added] employing limited resources to make rules, set standards, propagate principles, and broadly represent 'humanity' vis-a-vis states and other actors. Unlike states, INGOs can neither make nor enforce law. Unlike global corporations, they have few economic resources. (p. 172)

Poverty: Poverty is a level of living in which one does not have the means to provide basic needs for themselves. *Income poverty* defines a family's state of living if their total income is less than that deemed *livable* by a threshold, subjective by country. *Extreme poverty* is defined as the international standard of living on means below $1 (USD) per day. *Absolute poverty* "measures poverty in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017, para. 2).

Smallholder farmer: "Marginal and sub-marginal farm households that own or/and cultivate less than 2.0 hectare of land" (Singh, Kumar, & Woodhead, 2002, p. 3).

Subsistence farming: "When one family grows only enough to feed themselves. There is not usually much harvest to sell or trade, and what surplus there is tends to be stored to last the family until the next harvest" (Africa Development Promise, 2014, para. 1). This method of farming is most common in SSA, especially among the poor.

Sustainable development: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (International Institute for Sustainable Development, n.d., para. 1).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Seventeen goals agreed upon by the United Nations in 2015 aiming to "end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all" (United Nations, 2017, para. 1; see Appendix B).

Uganda: A nation in east-central Africa, north of Lake Victoria. Similar in size to Britain, Uganda was a British colony that received its independence in 1962 (Ingham, Kokole, Kiwanuka, & Lyons, 2018).

Village Savings and Loan Association: "A group of people who save together and take small loans from those savings. The activities of the group run in cycles of one year, after which the accumulated savings and the loan profits are distributed back to members" (Village Savings and Loan Associates, n.d., para. 1).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Poverty in SSA

Although poverty rates and percentages in SSA have fallen dramatically in the last 30 years, it remains the "only region in the world for which the *number* [emphasis added] of poor individuals has risen steadily and dramatically between 1981 and 2010" (The World Bank, 2013, para. 4). The number of people living in poverty in this region has doubled during the last nearly four decades. These individuals account for more than one-third of those living in extreme poverty across the globe (The World Bank, 2013).

Poverty in Uganda

For the last 50 years, Uganda has been one of the poorest nations in the world. The international *extreme poverty* line is set at $1.90 USD a day (The World Bank, 2016b), and, in 2013, more than one-third of Uganda's citizens lived below this threshold (The World Bank, 2013). Jeffrey Sachs, adviser to the United Nations and director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University said:

> Poor countries are poor because they are hot, [sometimes] infertile, malaria infested, often landlocked; this makes it hard for them to be productive without an initial large investment to help them deal with these endemic problems. But they

> cannot pay for the investments precisely because they are poor – they are in what economists call a 'poverty trap.' (as cited in Banerjee & Duflo, 2011, p. 3)

The Uganda Poverty Assessment 2016 indicated that, although monetary poverty has been reduced, Uganda still lacks in non-monetary poverty measures, such as "sanitation, access to electricity, education (completion and progression), and child malnutrition" (The World Bank Group, 2016, para. 2). These conditions are especially true for the northern and eastern regions of the country (see Figure 2), where 84.0% of the poverty-stricken population is reported to live. These regions have less access to infrastructure and lower levels of human capital; electricty is accessible to less than 10.0% of households in these areas, and 29.0% of the population does not use sanitary toilet facilities due to lack of availability (The World Bank, 2016b).

Though the country is still considered one of the poorest in the world, *poverty rates* have been reduced during the last two decades, and the overall state of the country has improved. From 2006 to 2013, extreme poverty rates fell from 53.2 to 34.6%, which displayed the second fastest reduction in SSA (The World Bank, 2016a). This decline was due in part to political peace, urbanization, and agriculture; 79.0% of the overall reduction was attributed to households in the agricultural sector, mainly as a result of favorable prices and beneficial weather conditions (The World Bank, 2016b). The World Bank (2016b) further explained the agricultural industry's impact in Uganda:

> This underscores the important role the sector plays in creating lucrative livelihoods, especially given that it currently employs over 60% of the population. As the backbone of Uganda's economy, the sector also contributes to over 70% of

> Uganda's export earnings and provides the bulk of the raw materials for predominantly agro-based industries. (para. 3)

Although agriculture contributes to overall poverty reduction, Uganda's rural population still remains among the poorest citizens of the nation. The Uganda Poverty Assessment 2016 indicated that about 90.0% of poor Ugandans live in rural areas, where every fourth persons lives in poverty compared to one in ten who reside in urban areas (The World Bank, 2016b). This can be seen especially in the northern and eastern regions that are dominated by rural and agricultural areas. More than 75.0% of individuals living in the northern region rely on subsistence farming for their livelihoods (Ali, Bowen, Deininger, & Duponchel, 2015). Such livelihoods are an inconsistent source of income, however, because this region is particularly prone to drought and still recovering from conflict (Ali et al., 2015). This part of Uganda has seen more warfare and disease within the last half-century than other regions of the nation. According to the World Bank Group (2016),

> [t]he Northern region is the worst, largely because the conflict took lives, damaged communities, destroyed assets, and had lasting effects on the aspirations of many individuals. Households in the north are larger and more likely to be headed by a woman and are more likely to have a household head with no education. Most households own land but they are less likely to own other assets and have lower access to infrastructure services. The Eastern region also lags behind the Central and Western region in nearly all of these measures. Households in the Northern region also have more limited access to markets and services. For households in these regions, distances to schools and health services

> are much larger as are distances to markets. The provision of agricultural extension and veterinary services is much lower and this is of concern given the reliance of these households on agriculture and livestock income. Rural financial institutions are almost entirely absent in the north. These constraints have limited the accumulation of human capital and the extent to which households can use their assets to earn a return in these regions. (p. 19)

Though the bulk of impoverished Ugandans – regardless of gender – reside in the northern and eastern regions, women-headed households have a magnified presence among the poor. These households are typically without much education, little to no land-ownership, and almost non-existent access to formal banking opportunities.

Gender Roles in Poverty and Agriculture

Women account for six of every 10 people who comprise the world's poorest population. More than 20.0% of women in SSA countries are undernourished (Women Thrive Alliance, 2014). These impoverished women are at higher risk for "violence, unfair labor and housing practices, discriminatory pricing, and danger at work and at home" (Cho, 2014, para. 2). Momsen (2004) stated that countries and societies supporting gender discrimination "pay a price in more poverty, slower growth and a lower quality of life, while gender equality enhances development" (p. 9).

Women make up an average of 43.0% of the labor force in the agricultural sectors of developing countries, and an even larger proportion in SSA (FAO, 2014; Beintema & Di Marcantonio, 2009; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006). Fifty-three percent of those practicing agriculture in Uganda are women (Ali et al., 2015), and, overall in SSA, women are estimated to produce about 80.0% of "foodstuffs for household consumption" (Ben-Ari,

2014, para. 1). Despite this, less than 15.0% of landowners in the world are women, and plots owned by males are approximately 33.0% more productive than similar plots farmed by women in Uganda (Ben-Ari, 2014; FAO, 2011; Beintema & Di Marcantonio, 2009; Lecoutere, 2017; O'Sullivan, Rao, Banerjee, Gulati, & Vinez, 2014; The World Bank Group, 2016). On average, women farmers in Uganda are 13.0 to 23.0% less productive than their male counterparts (Ali et al., 2015; O'Sullivan et al., 2014).

Women have significantly lower access rates to "productive resources and opportunity" (FAO, 2011, p. 5) than men, and that gap in access continues with various assets, inputs, and services such as land, labor, education, extension, financial services, and technology (Dancer & Hossain, 2017; FAO, 2011; Odame, Hafkin, Wesseler, & Boto, 2002; O'Sullivan et al., 2014; The ONE Campaign, 2015; USAID, 2015). Dancer and Hossain (2017) called this condition the "gender asset gap" (p. 15) and further explained that "inequalities in the share of wealth within a household have important consequences for women's empowerment and bargaining power, as well as household wellbeing, including education, health, and food and nutrition security" (p. 165). This condition inflicts great barriers and burdens on women involved in the agriculture industry, and, in turn, reduces the sector's capacity and potential as a whole, along with the respective nation's economy and society (FAO, 2011; Lecoutere, 2017; The ONE Campaign, 2015).

In some instances, women may receive equal levels of inputs, but still produce less than men. Researchers have also revealed that "broader norms, market failures, or institutional constraints alter the effectiveness of these resources for women" (O'Sullivan et al., 2014, p. 10). In Uganda, this is seen specifically in the provision of extension

services, implying the service has been programmed better for use by men than women – something governments and providers should be aware of and work to correct (O'Sullivan et al., 2014; Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010). Even further, most research and development systems do not consider women constituents when improving or creating new agricultural technologies, and thus underserve the end-users by not considering their "needs, preferences, and resources" (Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010, p. 584).

A study conducted by Ali et al. (2015) concluded that, on average, women in Uganda harvest less land than men, have 5.0 to 7.0% less access to extension services, and apply lower quality inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides. These statistics are true despite the average labor days of women surpassing men (140 days for women and 121 for men), and their prevalence in the workforce related to "agribusiness, food processing and consumer-related activity" (Odame et al., 2002, p. 3). In addition, men also are shown to grow more cash crops then women, which further increases their profits (Ali et al., 2015). Additional studies showed that men also have more access to manual laborers and household labor than women typically do, which may increase their productivity even more (O'Sullivan et al., 2014).

Among the deficit in inputs, access to yield-increasing technologies and labor, women are also expected to complete household chores, such as collecting firewood and water, and childcare tasks amid their workdays, and taking four hours or longer each day than men (Ali et al., 2015; FAO, 2011; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006; Momsen, 2004; O'Sullivan et al., 2014; USAID, 2015; Yeboah, Brigety II, & Pittman, 2018). Even when women take on more paid work hours, it is rare that men take over tasks within the home

to relieve them of the extra work. Women usually engage in two and a half more hours of unpaid house labor than men (Yeboah et al., 2018). In Kenya, located to the east of Uganda, and, in many respects similar, women in rural areas are said to work 135.0% of the hours of men, i.e., 676 minutes per day versus a typical man's 500 minutes per day (Momsen, 2004). Momsen (2004) gave an example of the challenges women face in work hours and chores in nations such as Kenya and Uganda:

> Families with several small children absorb much of the women's time in childcare unless there are older siblings who can assist the mother, although she may not wish them to do so if it means giving up their opportunity to attend school. The nutritional level of children is often negatively related to the distance mothers have to walk to collect water. The average round trip from house to water supply in Africa is five kilometers and thus the effort of carrying water can absorb 25 percent of a woman's calorific intake. Domestic chores in developing countries, where household appliances are rare, consume a high proportion of women's energy and time. (p. 74)

In summary, when one looks to analyze the gender gap within the agriculture sectors of SSA countries, O'Sullivan et al. (2014) offered a list of *key drivers* to consider. This list could be consulted by governments, NGOs, and others wishing to *empower women* through agricultural endeavors by creating and implementing policies to eradicate such a gap. The *key drivers* included:

- Labour (household vs. hired vs. child-care and household);
- Non-labour inputs (fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides);
- Agricultural extension and information;

- Land;
- Access to markets; and
- Human capital. (O'Sullivan et al., 2014, pp. 34-36)

Along with these *key drivers* of the gender gap in agriculture, organizations and governments should push to encourage women in agricultural education at a post-secondary level, although this has not been the norm in many SSA nations (Kante, Edwards, & Blackwell, 2013; Mukembo, Uscanga, Edwards, & Brown, 2017). A study conducted by Roberts and Edwards (2017) reported that, in an agricultural attachment program with a university in northern Uganda, women were often silenced and lacked representation in the program, despite the prevalence of female farmers in the area, which continued to reinforce a gender equality gap in agriculture. In this instance, participants in the study attributed such bias to a "'concerning trend' in Ugandan society" (Roberts & Edwards, 2017, p. 14) regarding the roles of women. One participant recognized a misconception that is voiced early on in a girl's life, discouraging her from pursuing an education in agriculture. Many participants asserted that in their experience, agriculture and farming was referred to as *man's work*, and girls should instead pursue careers such as nursing and art (Roberts & Edwards, 2017).

Education for girls and women in most of SSA, including Uganda, is a major issue when considering poverty and gender inequality. Ali et al. (2015) found that of the women surveyed, women typically had 2.2 years less of education than their male counterparts. UNESCO's Institute for Statistics reported in 2010 that only 65.0% of women in Uganda could read and write, and estimated that more than 130 million school-aged girls worldwide were not attending school. Further, UNESCO estimated that 15

million girls will never spend one day in school and about one-half of that number resides in SSA (Yeboah et al., 2018).

Data reported by the Ugandan Bureau of Statistics in 2012 indicated that even though 95.0% of girls attended primary school, only 22.0% continued to secondary school (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2012). This can be attributed to many different causes, such as household responsibilities, transportation needs, lack of funding to pay for the female students' school fees, gender-based violence, and harassment from school officials (Momsen, 2004; USAID, 2015; Yeboah et al., 2018). As Momsen (2004) stated:

> The costs of school in terms of the loss of the child's labour at home and the financial burden of paying for school supplies, suitable clothing such as uniforms, school fees and bribes to teachers also means that parents may decide not to educate daughter. (p. 65)

Despite the many challenges, it is typical for impoverished parents to want education for their children, potentially increasing the likelihood of improving their lives. However, "overburdened mothers may be forced to take daughters out of school to assist with childcare and household chores," including gardening and agricultural work (Momsen, 2004, p. 64).

Along with low levels of education among women in their youth, high childcare demands on adult women lower their agricultural productivity rates and ultimately reduces their income levels (O'Sullivan et al., 2014; The World Bank, 2016a). Female-headed households are more likely to be impoverished and female widows are twice as likely to fall below the poverty line than their male counterparts (The World Bank,

2016b). In addition, it was reported that four in five Ugandan women endure domestic violence, a rate that ranked second highest in SSA (The World Bank, 2016b).

INGOs and Agricultural Development in SSA

Development became a buzzword and global mission in the 1960s (Uphoff, 1993), and thereafter has grown into a topic of worldwide discussion, making its way into the title of the United Nations' list of goals for worldwide sustainability, including the MDGs and SDGs (United Nations, 2017) [see Apendices A & B]. Over time, different campaigns were created and cultivated to facilitate this development. Three sectors were identified with capacity to foster this growth: public, private, and a third that operates between these two. This third sector was defined by Uphoff (1993) as "the voluntary sector, the membership sector, the self-help sector, the participatory sector, or the collective action sector" (p. 609). Uphoff (1993) related this sector to NGOs, including INGOs, and to grass-roots organizations (GROs), though, in recent years, these terms have been used interchangeably more and more. All are frequently referred to as "channels for promoting economic and social development, also contributing to democratization of the economy, society, and polity" (Uphoff, 1993, p. 618). Furthermore, Shrum (2000) defined *rural-developmental NGOs* as a local or community authority that "promotes embeddedness in community formations" (p. 106). This definition could also include INGOs depending on their interactions with the communities in which they work.

The structure of an NGO, including many INGOs, is flexible – typically ranging from non-profit to profit, large or small, privately or publicly funded, formal or informal. As a "third sector actor" on issues of "development, human rights, humanitarian action,

environment," and so forth, NGOs serve a variety of purposes (Joshi, 2017, p. 1). NGOs were further described by Moghadam as "service organizations, professional associations, development research centers, human rights/women's rights groups, women in development organizations, and associations affiliated with political parties" (as cited in Osirim, 2001, p. 171). INGOs are specifically referred to as *transnational bodies* (Boli & Thomas, 1997) which act similarly under the aforementioned definitions, but rather on a global scale.

NGOs, and especially those targeting women, seemed to have overtaken the scene of SSA during the 1980s and 1990s. This was attributed to various countries' battles with "global recession, balance of payments difficulties, increasing debt, escalating unemployment, and worsening health conditions" (Osirim, 2001, p. 169). As a result, SSA is known to be a hub for NGO operations, and Uganda has been very hospitable in terms of housing NGO headquarters throughout the country. Although these organizations are numerous, and some are quite large, most only operate in small, single areas or regions. Whereas most NGOs would prefer to have a great impact over a larger area or the whole country, in most instances, "their range is a narrow locality – a group of villages, a single community, even a group of farmers" (Shrum, 2000, p. 106).

A quantitative study conducted by Barr and Fafchamps (2007) of Oxford University focused on the motivations and effectiveness of NGOs in Uganda. Some of the challenges they faced in their analysis were that NGOs did not typically specialize in only one sector of development, and tended to "assume a holistic approach to helping an often vaguely defined target group" (Barr & Fafchamps, 2007, p. 612). They concluded that satisfaction with NGOs relied on their use of a *participatory approach*, because

"both a permanent NGO presence in the client-community and community involvement in NGO decision-making raise client community satisfaction" (Barr & Fafchamps, 2007, p. 635). Further, this study concluded that NGO clustering, or the overlap of NGOs' locales of service, reduced community satisfaction and resulted in "extensive duplication of NGO effort at local levels" (Barr & Fafchamps, 2007, p. 637). Barr and Fafchamps (2007) demonstrated the challenges that many NGOs in Uganda may face; those of undefined goals and targets, as well as duplication of effort while overserving certain locations and underserving others.

Over time and through formalization of the NGO sector in SSA, many organizations have emerged or altered operations to include a specialization in agriculture. As Shrum (2000) explained: "[L]arger NGOs – some founded as relief agencies, some with an environmental focus – expanded operations to include agricultural assistance that would help clients raise incomes and become self-sufficient without undermining the natural resource base" (p. 106). These organizations then started offering agricultural trainings for growers and worked with communities and citizens to promote healthy and sustainable agricultural practices (Shrum, 2000).

Women's Empowerment

Rappaport defined empowerment as "a process by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over issues of concern to them" (as cited in Zimmerman, 1995, p. 581). Women's empowerment, and, subsequently, their equality, has long been a topic at the forefront of societal change and still dominates much of today's global conversation regarding development. Gender equality has made its way to be a top priority in many leading countries of the world, and is found on both global development

lists of priorities released by the United Nations (see Appendices A & B). This *equality* is not strictly treating men and women equally, but rather:

> . . . [an] equality of opportunity and a society in which men and women are able to lead equally fulfilling lives. The aim of gender equality recognizes that men and women often have different needs and priorities, face different constraints and have different aspirations. (Momsen, 2004, p. 8)

This idea focuses more on recognizing each person's different but equally important needs and priorities, as well as he or she being granted the tools to overcome individual constraints and accomplish personal goals (Momsen, 2004). The *empowerment approach* is also attributed to the "rise of participatory approaches to development and often mean[s] working with women at the community level building organizational skills" (Momsen, 2004, p. 14), as can be seen in many NGO development programs today.

Psychological empowerment was studied and defined by Zimmerman (1995), and he described an individual's self-analysis, which included his or her "[personal] beliefs that goals can be achieved, awareness about resources and factors that hinder or enhance one's efforts to achieve those goals, and efforts to fulfill the goals" (p. 582). This idea of empowerment included constituents of interpersonal components, interactional components, and behavioral components, encompassing reflection of self, community, and actions (Zimmerman, 1995). Empowerment, according to Zimmerman (1995), takes place on an individual level, an organizational level, and a community level; each level can be distinguished, but may also "influence or be influenced by empowerment at other levels" (p. 582). These *levels* can be further altered by personal characteristics or *criteria*,

such as the women's "class or caste, ethnicity, relative wealth, age, family position, etc." (Mosedale, 2005, p. 244).

Moser gave a holistic definition of empowerment in regard to women (as cited in Osirim, 2001). She explained empowerment as "giving women the right to determine choices in life and to influence the direction of change through the ability to gain control over crucial material and non-material resources" (as cited in Osirim, 2001, p. 168). Osirim (2001) further extended Moser's definition of women's empowerment in regard to international development by emphasizing the *non-material resources* attributed to such empowerment:

> Although choices for women regarding modes of participation in the labor market is certainly an important element in the definition of empowerment, women's status in the private sphere of home and family, within their communities, and their perceptions of self are also psychological well-being, self-esteem, self-respect, and autonomy coupled with *the striving for or achievement of economic independence* [emphasis added] all defined empowerment for women. With the addition of a social-psychological dimension of empowerment, it is clear that a woman's sense of identity and self-perception will be important determining factors in whether she considers herself empowered. One important source for empowering women is the establishment of social networks, most especially participation in indigenous, grassroots, and other organizations that address their needs. Forming such linkages with other women can aid in personal growth, increase self-esteem, and through concerted efforts with strength in numbers, lead to the achievement of their material and nonmaterial goals. (pp. 168-169)

It should be noted, however, that women's empowerment cannot occur with only women involved, but rather as a collaborative effort involving both men and women. Mosedale (2005) further explained that empowerment must be sensitive to gender relations, i.e., considering "the ways in which power relations between the sexes are constructed and maintained" (p. 244). Rowlands (1997) also concluded that the most effective ways to mobilize empowerment was to recognize *power relations* between the sexes. She stated:

> Eliminating male bias and moving women out of the condition of near-universal subordination they still currently occupy will not be achieved by tinkering with conditions of employment or national accounting procedures; it will require cultural, economic, and political changes. The power dynamics between men and women will have to be addressed. (p. 7)

Further, in terms of international development, empowerment is repeatedly referred to as a *process* or *process of change* and not a destination to be reached (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010; Dancer & Hossain, 2017; Rowlands, 1997). Oftentimes, women in the international development spectrum are considered disempowered because of the prevalence of gender inequality and the restrictions placed on their ability to make *strategic life choices*, according to Kabeer (as cited in Dancer & Hossain, 2017). And further through the intersections of gender with "class, location, and other markers of social marginilisation or exclusion" (Dancer & Hossain, 2017, p. 11).

Rural Women's Empowerment through Agriculture

Empowering women comprising the agricultural sector alone could be impactful because of its significance to the economies within countries located in SSA (FAO, 2011;

Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006; Lecoutere, 2017; O'Sullivan et al., 2014; The ONE Campaign, 2015; The World Bank, 2016a; USAID, 2015; Yeboah et al., 2018). Given the impact women potentially have on the agricultural industry, due to their vast involvement in and responsibility for it, empowerment within that domain is crucial. Odame et al. (2002) reported that twice as many women as men in developing countries work in the agriculture sector, and women comprise about 90.0% of the agricultural labor force in SSA. Momsen (2004) also stated that, as a general rule in developing countries, women provide an estimated 10.0% more of the labor than men in rural areas. These are some of the highest agricultural labor force participation rates in the world. Considering that food demand in the SSA is expected to increase more than 50.0% by 2030, the need for productive agriculturists creates an even greater demand on women in agriculture within the region (Kante et al., 2013; Mukembo et al., 2017; Yeboah et al., 2018). Further, the FAO (2011) stated:

> Cultural norms in the region have long encouraged women to be economically self-reliant and traditionally give women substantial responsibility for agricultural production in their own right. Regional data for SSA conceal wide differences among countries. . . . A number of countries have seen substantial increases in the female share of the agricultural labour force in recent decades due to a number of reasons, including conflict, HIV/AIDS and migration. (pp. 7-8)

This suggests that women's empowerment in SSA countries, such as Uganda, could be impactful and include improvements to their economic livelihoods. The FAO (2011) reported that women, given equal opportunities to resources compared to men, could increase their personal yields by 20.0 to 30.0%, and, thereby, raise the agricultural

output of developing countries by 2.5 to 4.0%. This could have a hefty impact by reducing the number of mal or undernourished an estimated 12.0 to 17.0% (FAO, 2011; Lecoutere, 2017).

Financial empowerment of women is also linked to improved child nutrition and increased rates of vaccination, therefore, diminishing the risk of famine and disease among children and youth (Cho, 2014; FAO, 2011; Lecoutere, 2017; USAID, 2017). A study by Case and Paxson in 2008 concluded that childhood malnutrition directly affected children's success as adults, and, thereby, furthered the poverty trap (as cited in Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). They also stated: "Undernourished children are more likely to become short adults, to have lower educational achievement, and to give birth to smaller infants. Undernutrition is also associated with lower economic status in adulthood" (as cited in Banerjee & Duflo, 2011, pp. 31-32). This research suggests that empowering women economically ultimately empowers their children and their nations.

In addition, women who have access to their own funds are more likely to send their daughters to school for longer (The ONE Campaign, 2015), and studies have repeatedly shown that women will "spend their incomes on their families' food, education, and health" (Ben-Ari, 2014, para. 9) more often than men. According to the anti-poverty organization, The ONE Campaign, every year a girl spends in school increases her future income by 10.0 to 20.0%. Further, if all women had a primary education, 15.0% fewer child deaths would occur; if all women had secondary education, child deaths would be halved, as well as the likelihood of early marriages reduced, and 59.0% fewer pregnancies would occur in girls under the age of 15 (The ONE Campaign, 2015). Even in terms of farming for both sexes, educated farmers earned more as a result

of the Green Revolution than their non-educated peers (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; FAO, 2011).

Governmental policies and cultural norms restrict many of those living in poverty – specifically women – from owning land and claiming rights to land and resources (Dancer & Hossain, 2017; FAO, 2011; Odame et al., 2002; O'Sullivan et al., 2014; The ONE Campaign, 2015; Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010; USAID, 2015). Quisumbing and Pandolfelli (2010) explained that these land issues continue into "property and contractual rights to land, water, and other natural resources" (p. 582), sometimes even in spite of laws standing to correct such inequalities.

Lack of access continues with formal financial systems (Cho, 2014; FAO, 2011; The ONE Campaign, 2015). With more than 1.3 billion women lacking access to banking accounts and no way to gain or develop credit, many women also face the issue of receiving loans, which can be crucial to those in the agricultural industry already at an economic disadvantage (UN Women, 2014). As Ben-Ari (2014) stated in AfricaRenewal: "Credit is undoubtedly necessary to acquire land, machinery, fertilizers, irrigation and high-quality seeds, and to hire labour" (para. 8). A lack of such places women in the agricultural sector at an even greater disadvantage compared to their male counterparts (Ben-Ari, 2014).

With the illiteracy rate of the world's population around 15.0% (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2013), and two-thirds of that number women, many of those in developing countries are not capable of reading a loan application even if access to such existed. Moreover, if a woman was able to read the loan application, with a lack of ownership and property rights, she would have little to no assets to serve as collateral –

something corporate lenders will not accept. Even further, if these aforementioned problems are all resolved, the lack of infrastructure within many developing countries would greatly hinder the establishment and furtherance of a profit-making enterprise. Lack of reliable transportation and electricity are among the biggest constraints within these regions, and to have secure access to either raises production costs so much that the likelihood of generating profits is greatly reduced (Ekeledo & Bewayo, 2009).

A U.S. government-funded agricultural development initiative, Feed the Future, developed the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) to "track the change in women's empowerment levels that occurs as a direct or indirect result of interventions under Feed the Future" (Alkire, et al., 2013, p. 2). This tool is used to analyze both women's empowerment and gender parity. To measure empowerment, the WEAI examines five domains, including production, resources, income, leadership, and time (Alkire et al., 2013), and are defined as follows:

- *Production:* Sole or joint decisionmaking [*sic*] over food and cash-crop farming, livestock, and fisheries as well as autonomy in agricultural production.
- *Resources:* Ownership, access to, and decisionmaking [*sic*] power over productive resources such as land, livestock, agricultural equipment, consumer durables, and credit.
- *Income:* Sole or joint control over income expenditures.
- *Leadership:* Membership in economic or social groups and comfort in speaking in public.

- *Time:* Allocation of time to productive and domestic tasks and satisfaction with the available time for leisure activities. (p. 3)

All five domains could assist in measuring women's empowerment and provide comprehensive and beneficial criteria for doing that. Each gives voice to a challenge faced by impoverished and disempowered women in LDCs, especially in Uganda. In a pilot test using the WEAI, it was found that women in the four districts of Uganda surveyed were most disempowered in terms of "access to and decisions on credit, group member[ship], workload, [and] leisure [time]" (Alkire et al., 2013, p. 11). The index could serve as an example of important challenges to women's empowerment, as well as considerations for those looking to empower women through agriculture.

This montage of challenges opens doors for external organizations to enter communities and provide a variety of assistance. INGOs and other non-profit organizations have a large presence in SSA, especially in Uganda, and many concentrate on empowering women through agriculture with the objective of lifting their communities, and sometimes working in partnership with local NGOs (Boli & Thomas, 1997; Uphoff, 1993). Many organizations choose to do such through microfinancing opportunities and the development of cooperative groups.

Modes of Empowerment: Microfinance and Cooperative Groups

Otero (1999) coined the popular definition of microfinance, and stated: "Microfinance is the provision of financial services to low-income, poor, and very poor self-employed people" (p. 9). She also argued that global development and microfinance intersect at three points: reaching the poor, building institutions, and deepening the financial system's reach. Celia Dugger, a *New York Times* foreign correspondent, stated

in 2006 that microfinance and microcredit have the ability to empower women through financial freedom when speaking on Grameen Banks' programs in Bangladesh. She stated:

> [Microcredit] offers hope. It offers, very importantly, empowerment to women. Overwhelmingly these microcredit loans are provided to women who are often quite financially powerless in their families. They often don't have rights to inherit property, they don't have bank accounts of their own. So the fact that the woman suddenly has the power to obtain a loan, even a very small loan, can be very important in giving her power and a counterbalance . . . . (Selinger, 2008, p. 28)

Microfinance connects productive capital, such as financial backing, with human capital (education and training) and social capital (organizations, promotion of democracy, strengthening of human rights) to "enable people to move out of poverty" (Otero, 1999, p. 11). A thesis study conducted in Uganda concluded that most women seek to earn an income or borrow from microfinance groups for four reasons: to pay school fees for their children; provide for the household necessities; expand or start a new business; and acquire personal assets (Nabayinda & Wallevik, 2014). A study conducted by the International Labor Force indicated that 31.0% of women's loan use was allocated for personal or family spending, as opposed to only 23.0% of men's loan use being distributed for such purposes (Majurin, 2012).

To assist in facilitating microfinance efforts and programs focused on women's empowerment, a revival of cooperatives has taken place in Africa, and most notably in SSA (Lecoutere, 2017). Cooperatives in the East Africa region, including Uganda, were

said to have the values of "self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, [and] solidarity" (Majurin, 2012, p. 2). Forty-two percent of cooperative members in Uganda were women, and an estimated 3.9 million Ugandans participated in cooperatives as of 2010 (Majurin, 2012). Through various case studies, these cooperatives have been shown to hold noteworthy benefits for the participants in terms of women's empowerment, as well as increases in their economic livelihoods (Lecoutere, 2017; Majurin, 2012). Lecoutere (2017) substantiated that cooperatives can contribute to women's empowerment in many ways, including opportunities to increase individual agency through economic enterprises, access to economies of scale networks, increased credit worthiness, service provision and skill development, and access to agricultural extension services.

O'Sullivan et al. (2014) connected Osirim's (2001) idea of social networking with agriculture in their report by describing the success of cooperative groups and explaining that "informal social networks play a critical role in the exchange of agricultural information and the adoption of agricultural technologies among farmers" (p. 36). This further created a unique opportunity for organizations looking to empower women through agricultural cooperative groups. In one study, it was even shown that women adopted better agricultural practices quicker when the information was disseminated by a female advisor (O'Sullivan et al., 2014). The value of social networks and relationships is also supported in the empowerment literature. These relationships can "serve advocacy and mobilization, in particular alliances and coalitions" and oftentimes result in "potential allies" within the NGOs and government agencies, as well as outside of these institutions (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010, p. 5).

Both of these methods, microfinancing and cooperative development, are popular in Uganda, and one organization that employs such while prioritizing agricultural development and improvement is the INGO, Field of Hope. Focusing on the rural northern region of the country, also the most impoverished and agriculturally dependent part of Uganda (Ali, et al., 2015; The World Bank, 2016), made its work an appropriate candidate for investigation.

Field of Hope

Field of Hope is a not-for-profit NGO originally started by Brandy Young Chaffer and Mike and Cathy Hafner to help meet the need for agricultural training in northern Uganda [see Figure 2]. Their mission states:

> We build a bridge across the knowledge gap by training on modern farming practices and setting up demonstrations to prove results. We partner with existing organizations targeting smallholder farmers and orphans to help them become more self-sustaining. We introduce and support mechanization initiatives because we understand the relationship between farm power and productivity. We encourage irrigation solutions because we understand the importance of water. We believe agriculture can have a direct impact on people's lives because it has had a meaningful impact on ours. (Field of Hope Organization, 2017, para. 1)

Field of Hope provides agricultural education and extension to the northern region of Uganda through its various partners. These partners include five orphan home schools and one church ministry with an agricultural mission (M. Hafner, personal correspondence, July 2, 2017). The organization has three *programs*: women's groups, children's gardens, and secondary agricultural curriculum development. These programs

include individual *projects* pertaining to the specific locations of implementation, such as the school that hosts an individual garden or a women's group in a specific district. Within the scope of their Victory Outreach Ministries Agricultural Program, Field of Hope mobilizes groups of women in the rural districts surrounding Lira, Uganda. Through these groups, Field of Hope then sponsors trainings on agricultural practices and proper VSLA services, loans, and operational practices. From time to time, they have also sponsored tractor plowing in the women's fields.

Field of Hope operates from the United States and relies on a Ugandan coordinator employed by their church partner to coordinate activities in the country. Over time, they have established relationships with staff members of another agricultural training organization, referred to as Sasakawa. Sasakawa Africa Association's mission reads: "Working in partnership with public and private stakeholders, in particular extension advisory services, to influence the transformation of African agriculture. Empowering farmers and specifically small holders to sustainably increase productivity in response to market demand" (Sasakawa Africa Association, n.d., para. 2). Through this organizational relationship, Field of Hope has gained access to three trainers used for agricultural and financial literacy trainings, along with an intern and recent university graduate currently assisting Field of Hope by providing school garden leadership and labor. This *team* assists in planning and delivering Field of Hope's smallholder women farmers' program, including multiple projects through its various forms of outreach.

Summary

Although gender inequality and poverty is evident across the globe, particularly in SSA and even more still in northern Uganda, methods exist for addressing the situation

through the work of external actors, such as INGOs, and their operations involving agricultural development supported by microfinance organizations and cooperatives. Much of SSA, including Uganda, remains extremely poverty stricken despite the efforts of the United Nations and many national governments, accounting for more than one-third of those living in poverty worldwide (The World Bank, 2013). Uganda is reported to be one of the poorest nations in the world and lacks greatly in non-monetary poverty measures (The World Bank, 2016b, para. 2). The country relies heavily on agriculture, especially in the poorest regions of the rural north and east where 75.0% of the inhabitants rely on subsistence farming (Ali et al., 2015).

Even further constrained by poverty around the world are women, who globally account for six of every 10 impoverished people (Women Thrive Alliance, 2014). In the agricultural sector, women make a large contribution in labor, i.e., about 53.0% of Uganda's agricultural system (Ali et al., 2015). Although they are heavily involved in food production, many still face gender equality challenges, with limited access to land, labor, education, extension, financial services, and technology (Dancer & Hossain, 2017; FAO, 2011; Mukembo et al., 2017; Odame et al., 2002; O'Sullivan et al., 2014; The ONE Campaign, 2015; USAID, 2015).

To help combat these issues, many external actors and organizations were created to facilitate development. One sector of organizations has proved to be greatly influential in the fight against poverty and inequality, i.e., INGOs, domestic NGOs, and GROs. SSA is inundated with development agencies across the continent, and Uganda in particular is an area of high activity. Most of these organizations, overwhelmed by the number of challenges facing their constituents, may attempt to assume a comprehensive approach,

but often with insufficiently defined beneficiaries or target groups (Barr & Fafchamps, 2007, p. 635).

The marginalization of women across the world has received attention from several organizations over the last few decades, most notably the United Nations, which included equality of women and girls in its lists of goals for global development (see Appendices A & B). One aim of these groups has been to *empower* women through many different methods. Moser defined *women's empowerment* as "giving women the right to determine choices in life and to influence the direction of change through the ability to gain control over crucial material and non-material resources" (as cited in Osirim, 2001, p. 168). This idea of *empowerment* also includes the aim of gender equity (Zimmerman, 1995). Osirim (2001) further explained that a *woman's empowerment* existed in her home and with her family members, and included aspects of her well-being, such that the likelihood of achieving *economic independence* was furthered.

One impactful way to empower women is through the agricultural sector, especially considering their involvement with it in SSA (FAO, 2011; Lecoutere, 2017; O'Sullivan et al., 2014: The ONE Campaign, 2015; The World Bank, 2016a; USAID, 2015; Yeboah et al., 2018). The FAO (2011) reported that if women were given equal access to inputs and resources compared to men, their personal yields could increase up to nearly one-third, while raising global agricultural outputs and reducing food insecurity. Empowering women financially also leads to better child health and fewer children in poverty and out of school (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Cho, 2014; FAO, 2011; Lecoutere, 2017; The ONE Campaign, 2015; USAID, 2017). A tool has been developed by Feed the

Future to measure empowerment of women through agriculture, the WEAI, that measures production, resources, income, leadership, and time (Alkire et al., 2013).

To facilitate this empowerment, especially in the case of agriculture, development agencies have opted to work with women through microfinancing opportunities and cooperative groups. Microfinance was defined by Otero (1999) as "the provision of financial services to low-income, poor, and very poor self-employed people" (p. 9). Women typically borrow from microfinance groups to pay school fees for their children, to provide household necessities, to expand or start a new business, and to acquire personal assets (Nabayinda & Wallevik, 2014); therefore, microfinance can be a lever for lifting individuals from poverty (Otero, 1999).

Cooperative groups are a mode of mobilization to enable microfinance to operate, and a way to empower many women; 3.9 million Ugandans participated in cooperatives as of 2010 (Majurin, 2012). Lecoutere (2017) maintained that cooperatives contribute to women's empowerment by giving them opportunities to increase individual agency through a variety of ways, such as economic ventures, access to economies of scale networks, increased credit, provision of educational and skills development services, as well as access to agricultural extension services. Literature (O'Sullivan et al., 2014) supports the community aspect of these cooperatives and how women's empowerment is beneficial in a number of pro-social ways.

An INGO that employed such methods while prioritizing agricultural development and improvement was Field of Hope, a not-for-profit U.S.-based organization originally started to help meet the need for agricultural training in northern Uganda. Field of Hope provides agricultural education and extension services to five

children's homes across Uganda's northern region, as well as to four cooperative women's groups. It also sponsors trainings on agricultural practices and proper savings and loan practices (Field of Hope Organization, 2017). Working with another organization, Sasakawa Africa Association, Field of Hope consults with trainers to plan and deliver its programs to mainly smallholder women farmers (SHWFs), some of whom provided data for this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used to conduct this study, and includes eight sections: Institutional Review Board, purpose of the study, objectives, qualitative inquiry, researcher's reflexivity, phenomenology, theoretical perspective, procedures, and summary.

Institutional Review Board

This study was conducted with approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), as policy of Oklahoma State University, and required by federal law, for studies involving human subjects. Approval was granted on August 8, 2017, and given the reference number of AG1736 (see Appendix C).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and derive meaning from the shared experiences of women who had participated in empowerment training programs in Uganda, including related agro-entrepreneurship opportunities, through a phenomenological research approach. In addition, the study sought to examine the impact of these opportunities in regard to improving the livelihoods of the participants and others in their communities.

According to Moustakas (1994), an investigator who conducts a phenomenological study "abstains from making suppositions, focuses on a specific topic freshly and naively, constructs a question or problem to guide the study, and derives findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection" (p. 47). The intent of this study, therefore, was to execute a *fresh and naïve* look into women's empowerment, as facilitated by an INGO, and to encourage further research in and reflection on the phenomenon. The *question* or *problem* guiding this study was operationalized as three research objectives:

Objectives

1. Describe the participants' experiences with regard to women's empowerment opportunities provided by an INGO in northern Uganda;
2. Examine the participants' perceptions of the INGO and impact of its empowerment opportunities on women and their respective communities;
3. Distill the *essence* of the participants' *lived experiences* in regard to their interactions with the INGO.

Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative inquiry was selected as the best method to understand the livelihoods of women in northern Uganda who were beneficiaries of Field of Hope's program and the impact of such on their empowerment projects. As Merriam and Tisdale (2016) stated, qualitative analysis is used in "uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (pp. 5-6).

Creswell and Poth (2016) explained that qualitative inquiry is conducted because "a problem or issue needs to be explored. This exploration is needed, in turn, because of a need to study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured, or hear silenced voices" (p. 45). Cornwall and Edwards (2010) argued that women's empowerment in development relies on these women's voices and participation in the decisions that ultimately affect their lives. They stated: "Women's own voices, analyses, experiences and solutions continue to be disregarded in the rush for results. It is time that more attention was paid to them" (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010, p. 8).

Further, qualitative research of inquiry is an appropriate method when the researcher aims to empower individuals to share their stories and be heard. Moreover, "interactions among people are difficult to capture with existing measures, and these measures may not be sensitive to issues such as gender differences, race, economic status, and individual differences" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 46). Because it was the aim of this study to give these oftentimes *silenced voices* an opportunity to be heard, especially regarding the issues of gender differences and economic status, the researcher conducted a qualitative inquiry.

Researcher's Reflexivity

Because the researcher was the mode or instrument used to acquire the investigation's data, an *axiological assumption* was taken with this qualitative study. Axiological refers to the positioning of the researcher within the context of an investigative inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Self-reflexivity was defined by Tracy (2010) as openness and honest realization of the researcher's own bias, and self, as well

as the researcher's audience. "Self-reflexivity encourages writers to be frank about their strengths and shortcomings" (Tracy, 2010, p. 842).

My social position is that of a white and female U.S. citizen, age 23. I hold a bachelor's degree in agricultural communications, which stirred my interest in learning more about human behavior through an interpretivist perspective. I also have experience with non-profit organizations through my mother's work in domestic rural housing development. Agriculture is of interest to me due in large part to my background with production agriculture, because I was raised on a horse and cattle ranch and participated in youth development programs such as FFA and 4-H. Due to this positioning and the researcher's closeness to the study's coding and analysis, according to Denzin, the "stories voiced represent an interpretation of the author as much as the subject" (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 21). My views on the equality of women, and experiences with many female role models, also added to my perspective regarding this inquiry, and related experiences impacted my analysis and interpretation of the study's findings, as well as application of the research methods used. My serving as an intern with Field of Hope from July 2017 to May 2018, throughout the duration of this study, could have also added to my perspective and positioning.

I employed the method of *bracketing* to "mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor" (Tufford & Newman, 2012) of the study. Prior to the interviews, I bracketed my personal assumptions and preconceptions three ways:

- Environment: I initially assumed I would witness a gender-challenged population where women's independent thought process and working environment was not as valued as that of their male counterparts.
- Status: I anticipated that women were discriminated against in terms of education and business and not encouraged to participate in such activities or demonstrate leadership. I expected to see men as leaders in the household and community, and that they would find little value in women participating in leadership roles.
- Organization: Although Field of Hope's intentions were positive, I predicted the execution of activities to lack formality and stated purposes. I doubted whether the women had been asked for their input, opinions, or needs. The INGO seemed to truly want to help and be an impactful influence, but communication channels appeared to have been blocked or not properly utilized.

Tracy (2010) suggested that "high quality qualitative methodological research is marked by (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence" (p. 839). This study was guided by these criteria. According to Tracy (2010), a *worthy topic* is one that is "relevant, timely, significant, [and] interesting" (p. 840). Based on the relevance of women's empowerment within the United Nation's global development goals, as well as recent development discussions, the phenomenon understudy displayed relevance, timeliness, and significance. These three qualities alone made it interesting.

Rich rigor is exemplified by the use of "sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex theoretical constructs, data and time in the field, sample(s), context(s), (and) data collection and analysis process" (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). This study was carefully

crafted to employ appropriate theoretical perspectives, and strict methods and practices were followed to ensure accuracy and rigor. In addition, the researcher involved experienced mentors to assist in debriefing to help ensure rigor.

To achieve *sincerity*, Tracy (2010) recommended self-reflexivity and transparency. As described above, in-depth self-reflexivity was demonstrated, and transparency was implemented throughout the entire study regarding its methods and challenges. *Credibility* implies "research marked by thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (nontextual) knowledge, and showing rather than telling; triangulation or crystallization; multivocality; member reflections" (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). Such was maintained through deep research and inquiry, as well as effectively communicating the study's research methods and results.

Tracy (2010) defined *resonance* as research that "influences, affects, or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through aesthetic, evocative representation; naturalistic generalizations, [and] transferable findings" (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). This study's aim was to move or influence NGOs operating within the sphere of women's empowerment by giving voice to beneficiaries' experiences. *Significant contribution* implies adding "conceptually/theoretically, practically, morally, methodologically, [or] heuristically" (Tracy, 2010, p. 840) significant research to the existing literature. Scant evidence exists in the literature examining the experiences and voices of beneficiaries of women's empowerment projects in Uganda; therefore, this study contributed to understanding better this phenomenon.

Ethical studies, according to Tracy (2010), are those that "consider procedural ethics (such as human subjects), situational and culturally specific ethics, relational

ethics, [and] exiting ethics (leaving the scene and sharing the research)" (p. 840). The researcher went to great lengths to ensure respect and ethical practices in working with her interviewees and Field of Hope's partners. I dressed to the cultural standards and conducted my research in ways that aligned with the requirements of the Institutional Review Board of Oklahoma State University (see Appendix C). *Meaningful coherence* is exemplified when a study "achieves what it purports to be about, uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals, [and] meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings, and interpretations with each other" (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). This thesis research study connected literature, theoretical perspectives, research practices, results, and interpretations and discussion together to produce a robust and deep understanding of the phenomenon studied.

To further ensure the quality of this study, the researcher also employed peer debriefing. Lincoln and Guba, as cited in Spall (1998), explained peer debriefing as a process in which "a researcher and an impartial peer preplan and conduct extensive discussions about the findings and progress of an investigation" (p. 280). This collaboration maintains and encourages the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Spall, 1998). Peers involved in reviewing this study's findings included three doctoral graduates with backgrounds in international agricultural development and in conducting qualitative inquiries. One peer is a native of Uganda who has conducted various studies on agricultural education in his country. Another was a graduate of Oklahoma State University who conducted research related to agricultural development and the role of women in Uganda. The third, a member of the researcher's committee, had done a

phenomenological study in Southeast Asia involving agriculture and smallholder farmers' experiences.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology, according to Patton (2015), is the "study of how people describe things and experience them through their senses" (p. 116). As defined by Moustakas (1994), a *phenomenon* is that which appears in consciousness, thus such are "the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge" (p. 26). Such an approach was applied in this study as I worked to capture a *deep understanding* (Creswell & Poth, 2016) of how the women involved in the INGO's empowerment projects experienced that, and also how they described and understood their experiences in regard to a phenomenological *essence* (Moustakas, 1994). We use *essences* to "enrich and clarify our knowledge and experience of everyday situations, events, and relationships," according to Moustakas (1994, p. 48). Moustakas (1994) continued to explain that knowledge of these *essences* are the "ultimate in *understanding* [emphasis added]" (p. 51). In addition, this approach also includes "the way in which the experience is interpreted" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 9).

Throughout the history of social sciences, phenomenological studies have been used to assist in describing and understanding the events that occurred and the experiences of those who lived through such occurrences (Yin, 2016). Such investigations have included patients in medical cases, students and teachers in educational settings and interventions, and the phenomena of patients who suffer mental illnesses and traumas (Yin, 2016). Although most studies of women's empowerment and its relationship to the work of INGOs in developing countries did not use phenomenology

as the mode of inquiry, many did employ *open-ended interviews* in case studies with participants to grant them a voice in the research process. For example, Naved (1994) conducted a study using open-ended interviews of INGO staff, beneficiaries, and community leaders related to women's empowerment through savings groups in Bangladesh. However, unlike using open-ended interviews to predict or analyze, phenomenology provides the flexibility to "*describe and understand* [emphasis added] the phenomena rather than to explain experiences in order to predict and control them" (Garko, 1999, p. 169). It was the intent of this study to *describe* the experiences of the women with whom Field of Hope worked to *understand better* which of their needs were being met and the challenges they still faced.

Theoretical Perspective

A blend of theories was used to guide this study. Critical theory was the base perspective and supported by feminist theory. With significant relevance to each theory base, the theories' primary foci on human relationships and social interactions supported using such in this inquiry.

According to Fay, critical theory is "concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender" (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 29). This study explored the power relations of the SHWFs and their households, communities, and families after involvement with the INGO, Field of Hope. The goal of critical inquiry is to "critique and challenge, to transform, and to analyze" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 59) relationships, with the intent that, in this case, actions will be taken to increase the effectiveness of the INGO's programs and, thereby, further empower the women participants. My goals were to report clearly on what the INGO

could improve, explicate what they were doing well, and describe how the women viewed the organization so the INGO could more effectively achieve its objectives in the future.

Themes from feminist theory also guided the study's theoretical perspective. Feminist theory has roots in critical theory and intersectionality. The theory poses questions related to "the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 28). As cited in Creswell and Poth (2016), Lather stated that the objectives of feminist theory are to "correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position" (p. 28). I aimed to provide *depth* and *rich description* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the women's experiences before and during the empowerment projects in which they participated, and evaluate the INGO's actions to improve equality regarding their social positions.

These two theories were merged to form the theoretical perspective of this study. The foundations of both rest in empowerment and equality, and more specifically the motivations of an individual to overcome unwarranted preconceptions, therefore, giving justification for their conjoining. Critical theory analyzes the organization of knowledge and power within a social setting and assists in examining how individuals become "oppressed or subjugated" (Reeves, Albert, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008, p. 633). After this examination, according to Lather, feminist theory can be used to specify gender inequities and work to correct such (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 28).

Procedures

Group of Interviewees

The study's participants were selected based on the suggestions of key informants (Rogers, 2003) knowledgeable of Field of Hope's programming in northern Uganda. Key informants are those individuals within a social system who "are especially knowledgeable about the [social] networks in the system" (Rogers, 2003, p. 310). For this study, key informants included Field of Hope's Ugandan coordinator, district coordinators who organize the groups and interact with the program coordinator, pastors who aid in communication among groups and coordinators, and chairpersons similar to presidents of the women's groups. For two groups, the chairpersons presented the opportunity to be interviewed to the women beneficiaries of Field of Hope's program, and various women volunteered. In the other two groups, a key informant identified good candidates for interviews and the women were approached by the key informant who asked them to participate in the study. In all, 12 SHWFs volunteered to be interviewed, three from each district (see Tables 1 and 2) within Field of Hope's service reach. All participants were women living in the northern region of Uganda and active participants in a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) group, as facilitated by Field of Hope and its partners.

Table 1. *Selected Personal Characteristics of the Study's Participants*

Pseudo-name	District	Age	Est. Yearly Income (UGX)[a]	Year of School[b,c,d]	Self-Reported Literacy[e]	Children/ Dependents[f]	Marital Status
Woman 1	Amolatar	63	300,000	S4	Both	4/6	Widow
Woman 2	Amolatar	32	200,000-1,000,000	P6	Some	3/5	Married
Woman 3	Amolatar	64	5,000,000	P7	Some	4/7	Married
Woman 4	Apac	52	150,000	P5	Yes, native	6/4	Married
Woman 5	Apac	35	200,000	S1	Read, little write	4/1	Single
Woman 6	Apac	56	1,190,000	P7	Some	5	Single
Woman 7	Alebtong	47	10,000,000	S6	Yes	6/4	Married
Woman 8	Alebtong	46	200,000	S2	Yes	6/2	Married
Woman 9	Alebtong	28	500,000	S1+V	Both	4	Married
Woman 10	Dokolo	47	1,000,000	P7	Both	13/17	Married
Woman 11	Dokolo	29	250,000	P7+3V	Both	2	Married
Woman 12	Dokolo	48	1,200,000	P5	Both	9/5	Married

Note. [a]$1.00 USD = 3,706.10 UGX. [b]Secondary school. [c]Primary school. [d]Vocational school. [e]"Both" or "yes" denotes the woman's ability to write and read; "some" denotes the woman's lack of confidence in her ability to write or read; "native" refers to the native language of the region, Luo. [f]Dependents includes grandchildren, orphans within the family or community, or young adults needing financial assistance.

Table 2. *Other Selected Characteristics of the Study's Participants*

Pseudo-name	Business Other than Gardening/Farming	Group Office	Land Ownership	Crops[b] Grown
Woman 1	No	Chairperson	4 acres, she owns	B, M, P
Woman 2	No	None	6 acres, father-in-law owns	B, M, R
Woman 3	No	Chairperson	6 acres, her "household" owns	B, M, SF, SS
Woman 4	Porridge	Speaker	5 acres, her husband owns	M, SF
Woman 5	No	Secretary	3 acres, her brother owns, she owns 1 acre	B, SF
Woman 6	Yes: seed selling	None	4 acres, she owns	C, M, SF
Woman 7	Yes: restaurant, hotel, [convenient kiosk] shop[a]	None	9 acres, she and her husband own	C, M, SB,
Woman 8	Yes: selling clothes	None	20 acres, father-in-law owns	B, C, R
Woman 9	Yes: tailoring	Secretary	2 acres, she and her husband own	GN, SF
Woman 10	Yes: [convenient kiosk] shop	Treasurer	7 acres, her husband owns	B, C, M, SF
Woman 11	Yes: sells bread and sewing	Vice-chairperson	3 acres, her husband owns	M, R, SF, SS
Woman 12	No	Chairperson	6 acres, she and her husband own	C, M, SF

Note. [a]The term "shop" typically refers to a shop in which convenience goods are sold, such as soda and small snacks. [b]Crops: B = beans; C = cassava; GN = ground nut; M = maize; P = peas; R = rice; SB = soybean; SF = sunflower; and SS = sim-sim (sesame)

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants during August of 2017, as guided by 25 open-ended questions developed by the researcher and Oklahoma State University faculty (see Appendix D). Semi-structured interviews are a less formal approach than a researcher relying solely on predetermined questions, with no obligation to ask all questions depending on participants' circumstances and responses (Teijlingen, 2014). The interview protocol avoided asking about empowerment directly, but instead inquired about different indicators of empowerment, such as economic independence or income, land ownership, agricultural production, education, resources, time, and leadership (Alkire et al., 2013; Osirim, 2001). The interviews were recorded using a mobile telephone, as well as an additional handheld device – an iPad – to ensure accuracy and completeness of the audio recordings. During the interview, the researcher expressed her intention to distribute the findings of her research to the INGO, as well as to the individuals' groups collectively, as a gesture of reciprocation.

Observation and reflexivity (Tracy, 2010) were also conducted by the researcher as a way to triangulate findings emerging from the interviews. A field notes journal was kept by the researcher throughout the interviews and observations ranged from passive to balanced to participatory (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Translation

Eleven of the twelve women interviewed elected to use a translator to complete their interview in Luo, the local language. Woman 7 was fluent in English and asked to be interviewed in such. Although much literature argues whether or not translation needs to be visible in research, it was the researcher's intent to be transparent, as prescribed by

Tracy (2010), and thus full-disclosure of the interpreter's role during the study's interviews is made.

The translator in this study was a Ugandan male in his late twenties. He was recommended to the researcher by the Ugandan coordinator for Field of Hope. The coordinator had worked with this translator through the local church she attended, and where she was also employed. The translator had assisted the church in translating during its services and also in agricultural trainings hosted by the church. Her recommendation was made based on the translator's experience with both English and Luo, and his agricultural background, as well as his lack of prior experience with the INGO's projects. The researcher requested that the translator have no prior association with the INGO to provide less opportunity for bias or contamination of the women's responses through the translation in favor or not of the INGO's services.

The translator grew up in the area in which the women participants lived, and was also attending a university in Uganda at the time of the study, where English is the language of instruction. The researcher first met with the translator to discuss the study and verify his fluency in English. Prior to the interviews, the researcher met with the translator a second time to discuss the interview process and questions, as well as the study's purpose and the expectation of confidentiality from the interpreter regarding the interviewees' responses. A confidentiality agreement was signed during this second meeting (see Appendix E). This process can be considered an "induction to the research," as recommended by Edwards (1998). These meetings were also used to create a relationship with the translator to ensure his character and ability to translate accurately.

As recommended by Edwards (1998), the translator was allowed to translate in third person, as he was most comfortable doing that. The transcriptions, as done by the researcher, therefore, were also written in third person for the eleven interviews in which the translator was used. While some researchers discourage this practice (Freed, 1988), Edwards (1998) encouraged such to contribute to a study's critical reflexivity. She stated that this method also "clearly signals one aspect of the interviewees' lives – in many circumstances, especially their access to public resources, they can only communicate with the aid of another (bilingual) person" (Edwards, 1998, p. 203). Because the majority of women involved in Field of Hope's program are not fluent in English, they must rely on the Ugandan coordinator or a male pastor to translate for them when speaking to the American representatives of the organization. This exemplifies a barrier to communication between the beneficiaries and those responsible for the program's activities. Therefore, having the translations given and transcribed in third person gave the researcher and the INGO an opportunity to understand better an ongoing challenge faced by the women beneficiaries regarding language, and also prohibited the "interpreter's presence and role" (Edwards, 1998, p. 203) from being hidden, which further supported the study's transparency.

> It is important to recognize that the translator
>
> makes [his or] her mark on the research, whether this is acknowledged or not, and in effect some kind of 'hybrid' role emerges in that, at the very least, the translator makes assumptions about meaning equivalence that make [him or] her an analyst and cultural broker as much as a translator. (Temple & Young, 2004, p. 171)

Just as the findings represent the interpretation of the researcher, or *author*, as labeled by Denzin (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 21), such also represents the transmitted understanding of the translator/interpreter. Moreover, it is also important to recognize that the interpreter's gender and social class may have affected the women participants' responses in regard to what were culturally acceptable responses, although the researcher's perception of the women's responses was that of transparency, honesty, and trust.

Data Analysis

By compiling transcripts of the participants' interviews coupled with my reflections and observations, I was able to construct an understanding of their *lived experiences* (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Moustakas, 1994) through Field of Hope's empowerment program. In accord with Moustakas' (1994) protocol for phenomenological data analysis, I gathered data and reviewed it, highlighting "'significant statements,' sentences, or quotes" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 79) to provide a description and understanding of how the women interpreted their lived experiences regarding interactions with Field of Hope. These *significant statements* were transformed into themes or *clusters of meaning* (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Moustakas, 1994) to be analyzed through coding. Coding can be described as using "simple words or short phrases to capture the meaning of a larger portion of textual or visual data" (Yin, 2016, p. 334).

Open coding was first conducted to "understand how data might relate to broader conceptual issues" (Yin, 2016, p. 196). The codes were then categorized into parts, or themes, referred to as *axial coding* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 206). This was done to

capture recurring patterns found across the data that were indicators of the study's potential themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Throughout this process, the researcher also used note-taking and memos to develop lists and separate connections based on her own assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016), and to "reflect on the larger thoughts presented in the data" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 188). To help in this organization, I developed two separate Excel documents, organizing the codes with supporting statements of participants, and then used such to evaluate the relevance and strength of the emerging themes.

Using these emerging themes developed through the axial coding and memo writing, theoretical statements or tentative schemes were developed representing the "significance of interpretations and conclusions in relation to the literature and previous studies" (Yin, 2016, p. 199). These *themes* were then analyzed in regard to "describing, classifying, and interpreting the data" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 189). I then invited colleagues and mentors familiar with qualitative and phenomenological studies to view my codes and derive their own themes. Following their analysis, we discussed the themes further to develop a *thick description* and *deep understanding* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the women's lived experiences and ensure accurate representation of such by the study's final themes and subthemes.

Summary

The line of inquiry paired with the theoretical lenses discussed in this chapter helped to craft the methodology guiding this study and its implementation (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016; Moustakas, 1994). To appropriately give voice to the women involved in the INGO's empowerment program, the qualitative approach

aimed to explore the issue of gender parity and women's empowerment (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010), especially regarding their agricultural pursuits in northern Uganda. Twelve interviews were conducted, as stated above, transcribed, and then analyzed, as well as triangulated with the researcher's field notes, observations, and reflexivity (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016; Tracy, 2010; Yin, 2016). The findings of this analysis, including themes, subthemes, and the phenomenon's *essence*, are detailed in chapter four.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter outlines and reports the findings of the study. These findings are the results of a qualitative inquiry regarding one INGO's women's empowerment program in Uganda, as guided by the study's purpose and three research objectives.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and derive meaning from the shared experiences of women who had participated in empowerment training programs in Uganda, including related agro-entrepreneurship opportunities, through a phenomenological research approach. In addition, the study sought to examine the impact of these opportunities in regard to improving the livelihoods of the participants and others in their communities.

According to Moustakas (1994), an investigator who conducts a phenomenological study "abstains from making suppositions, focuses on a specific topic freshly and naively, constructs a question or problem to guide the study, and derives findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection" (p. 47). The intent of this study, therefore, was to execute a *fresh and naïve* look into women's empowerment, as facilitated by an INGO, and to encourage further research in and

reflection on the phenomenon. The *question* or *problem* guiding this study was operationalized as three research objectives:

Objectives

1. Describe the participants' experiences with regard to women's empowerment opportunities provided by an INGO in northern Uganda;
2. Examine the participants' perceptions of the INGO and impact of its empowerment opportunities on women and their respective communities;
3. Distill the *essence* of the participants' *lived experiences* in regard to their interactions with the INGO.

Translation

As noted in Chapter 3, a translator was used for eleven of the twelve interviews. Therefore, the eleven participants' transcriptions and related quotations are stated in the third person, as translated for the researcher. This use of third person was encouraged by Edwards (1998) to prohibit hiding the translator's position and role in the research process. Woman 7 elected to participate in her interview speaking English because she was fluent and felt comfortable expressing herself to the researcher in the language.

Discussion of Themes and Subthemes

To derive the findings of this study, the researcher interviewed 12 women beneficiaries of the INGO Field of Hope's activities in Uganda, and then analyzed those interview transcripts as well as correspondence and information provided by the INGO and its agents. This analysis produced 33 codes from which five major themes and 11 subthemes were derived (see Table 3).

The five emergent themes were *securing children's futures through education*, *empowerment and improved livelihoods as a result of INGO participation*, *further aspirations for improved quality of life*, *ongoing challenges*, and *fear of abandonment by the INGO.* The first theme, *securing children's futures through education*, included one subtheme: *belief that a better future is directly related to education.* The theme *empowerment and increased livelihoods as a result of INGO participation* was supported by five subthemes: *development of self-esteem; gender equity and inclusiveness; building community; economic empowerment;* and *improved agricultural practices.* The third theme, *further aspirations for improved quality of life*, encompasses two subthemes: *need for greater income generation* and *need for additional agricultural inputs.* The theme *ongoing challenges* included three subthemes: *burden and responsibility of paying school fees; climate and weather volatility;* and *access to and affordability of health care.* The final theme, *fear of abandonment by the INGO*, revealed no inherent subthemes.

The *prevalence* (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the themes (see Table 4) was assessed to determine the number of participants' responses for each. This aided the researcher in determining and expressing the strength of each theme for the purpose of interpretation and discussion.

Table 3. *Emergent Themes and Subthemes*

THEME 1	***Securing children's futures through education***	
		Belief that a better future is directly related to education
THEME 2	***Empowerment and improved livelihoods as a result of INGO participation***	
		Development of self-esteem
		Gender equity and inclusiveness
		Building community
		Economic empowerment
		Improved agricultural practices
THEME 3	***Further aspirations for improved quality of life***	
		Need for greater income generation
		Need for additional agricultural inputs
THEME 4	***Ongoing challenges***	
		Burden and responsibility of paying school fees
		Climate and weather volatility
		Access to and affordability of health care
THEME 5	***Fear of abandonment by the INGO***	

Table 4. *Theme Prevalence*

Theme	**Prevalence (N=12)**		**Participants**
Securing children's futures through education	10		W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, W7, W8, W9, W10, W12
Empowerment and improved livelihoods as a result of INGO participation	12		W1-W12
Further aspirations for improved quality of life	12		W1-W12
Ongoing challenges	10		W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, W7, W8, W9, W10,W12
Fear of abandonment by the INGO	8		W1, W3, W5, W6, W7, W8, W10, W11

Note. W = woman

Theme #1: *Securing children's futures through education*

The participants expressed great concern for their children's futures and the necessity of working to provide them with a high-quality education. When asked about her greatest accomplishment in the last five years, Woman 7 stated:

> I have been able to pay my children's fees. . . . Like when soya is good, I am going to sell it now, and I'm going to pay their tuitions, pay their fees, and improve our livelihoods even . . . because, for us, our main focus now is for the children to live and study. To have a good life, not only better life, but we long to see them finish well.

The women were motivated to work hard and make money by the prospect of their children gaining an education and, therefore, better lives. The participants expressed the difficulty of relying on farming to supply the money for school fees, especially when the weather is unpredictable. They mentioned, however, what a great help the savings-scheme, as fostered by the INGO, had been to supplying the money for school fees when the family could not afford such. Woman 8 described a child getting rejected from school when late payment of her fees occurred:

> Another challenge is school fees. Last week, one of the child[ren] is sent away from school and she's struggling. Took her back to school and she was not okay - there was no money. But she struggled with them to ensure school for her daughter . . . . So through Field of Hope by also getting money from the saving scheme here, she was able to take back the child to school with the other children.

Woman 8 also expressed that if she were able to send her children elsewhere, and in return they could acquire money for school fees and work, she would be willing to let

them go. Many women expressed a personal responsibility to secure their children's education, such as Woman 5. This interviewee said: "She wants the life of her kids to be improved through studies by the money she will get through digging and through farming so that they will have better future." Woman 7 also referred to the labor she and her husband had done to secure their children's education and a better future; she stated:

> Because we have done labor to get them to school, so they get knowledge, they will get a better future. Some of them may do agriculture, some may do other things . . . . I always tell them, 'you, you are not going to live like us. You [will] live higher than this. You may own your own tractors, own whatever'. . . . They are growing a higher mind.

Belief that a better future for their children is directly related to education. Momsen (2004) reported that, although the parents typically have lower levels of education, many families in poverty perceive that education is directly related to a more successful life removed from poverty. The women's responses during the study's interviews reflected the same point of view. In accord, Woman 12 said:

> [O]ne thing she would like to change is so that those kids should put all their attention on studies, so that all the way, their life can get changed. When they acquire knowledge, they are in positions to really be changed . . . ."

Woman 10 agreed and stated: "She wanted [the children] to study, so they have a bright future. . . . Their future will be good when they study well." Woman 3's beliefs were similar, and more so for her daughters. She explained:

> She wants the kids to not be like the way she is – she wants them to study. . . . She is saying, that by acquiring knowledge – her kids will be better than them. In

those days, in her days, girls weren't allowed to go to school [past P7], but this time, her girls are going to school so they will have better life – more than her.

Theme #2: *Empowerment and improved livelihoods as a result of INGO participation*

Osirim (2001) explained empowerment as "psychological well-being, self-esteem, self-respect, and autonomy coupled with the striving for or achievement of economic independence" (p. 169). The five subthemes within this broad theme explored the women's revelations about their feelings of empowerment and experiences of improved livelihoods through interactions with Field of Hope.

Development of self-esteem. Many participants voiced the discovery of elements of empowerment through their involvement with the INGO and its activities. Woman 7, a leader in her group, recognized that Field of Hope had helped them to realize their abilities as women. She said:

> Because they come to saving . . . we [group members] tell them a few things about how they can keep their homes well, how they can keep their families. You should never run away from your home because of poverty, because *we can also do something as women* [emphasis added], and we can help our husbands to raise our homes, to make our families well. . . ."

Woman 9 attested to an increase of self-confidence, and said:

> [N]ow they are bold – they can even speak in public in front of a hundred people. They can speak freely. And when you [white people] come, they fear you, but they can talk to you – they are lacking language but they can communicate with you, so they appreciate the organization [Field of Hope] for the hard work.

Gender equity and inclusiveness. When speaking about empowerment through equality, inclusivity was important; therefore, Field of Hope worked to include both genders if the group so chose. Husbands of the women were invited to participate in the groups, and many found that this helped encourage the wives to participate. Along with this inclusivity was an embracing of members from all socioeconomic classes and religious backgrounds. Woman 8 described the importance of including everyone. She said:

> Field of Hope telling people *without differentiating the denomination, where you come from* [emphasis added], but getting all of them together from different localities and work them together so they can unify themselves and get ideas from one another so that they can eradicate jealousies, and other things that are anti-development, so that they can . . . grow together. They can get plans from one another. . . . This has made Field of Hope to make a difference within this locality because *they don't differentiate people* [emphasis added], so it has made people come together, and unite and become one; so it has really made changes in this community.

Despite the strict cultural ties to an individual's own religious preference and church family in Uganda, many of the women interviewed stated that they were of different churches than the Christian church Field of Hope partnered with to facilitate its projects, Victory Outreach Ministry. Woman 9, a Catholic, stated that the group "brought them together. It has helped them to know people they used to not know, it has helped them to unite together" despite their religious differences. She continued to explain: "They used to be so feared of people, and they were not very well connected in their

families because . . . they were so individualistic. But now, they have come together . . . ."

Building community. This lack of differentiation also attested to the building of community. Woman 12 spoke of the other women as her friends. She said, "[Field of Hope] has given her a company with friends. . . . Field of Hope has helped people come together in savings, and now people are growing together. . . . [Her favorite thing] is staying in one accord, in unity." Woman 8 agreed and stated that bringing the women into community with one another was a "very good achievement." She continued: "Field of Hope has brought them together. That has enabled them to have unity . . . ."

Woman 7 described the consistent encouragement group members received from one another. She stated:

> . . . [W]e can now feel we are related so when we have a common interest, we become closer and related. We gain their relationship with them – we encourage one another, in anything. We encourage one another. It has built us up, even the women in the group . . . because we can see, when they come, they have little change of knowledge, how they are able to interact with others. [Now] they have become nicer to one another.

Economic empowerment. To this subtheme, many women spoke to the value of the INGO's contributions regarding improvements in their monetary livelihoods, whether through the savings scheme or their increased agricultural yields. During one group meeting in Dokolo, a woman told her story of producing enough yield of sunflowers to afford purchasing better seed for the next planting season, and then producing enough from that crop to build a new kitchen. Woman 2, attributing their increase of yields and

incomes to the agricultural trainings, expressed: “Because Field of Hope has taught them to plow or plant seeds, it has enabled them to get high[er] income.” Woman 7 stated: “We are encouraged and have hope now. It has affected our lives so much and *just improving our income in agriculture* [emphasis added].” These testaments support the *economic empowerment,* as described by Osirim (2001). Woman 11 also recognized a large difference in her life because of Field of Hope’s presence. She said:

> There’s a big difference. Now that she’s in the group, she has more money. Reason being, they have savings here. You come and borrow and use and step-up the business and then come back and bring the money. It has increased the money that she has. Before that, there was nowhere to get money from. When you have a problem, you were stuck in a hole because there was nowhere to borrow money from.

Along with this economic empowerment, an increase in positive monetary management was also described. Woman 6 said:

> . . . Field of Hope has helped a lot. Before, she did not know how to keep money, but now she can keep money. It has improved her skills, and now she can think right. It is great. She is happy with them. . . . [S]he learned how to keep money through Field of Hope. [She] used to use money recklessly, but these days she knows how to economize money.

Improved agricultural practices. Economic empowerment also could be seen through the women’s agricultural practices. They had experienced increased yields through improved farming practices, as well as more use of agricultural inputs. Woman 7 stated:

> Field of Hope has, with agriculture, taught us many things – how to use land, how to have best crops, when to know that your crop is ready or when your crops are not yet ready. Field of Hope has taught us how to learn to be best in the garden and what time, timing of the plantations [plantings]. Field of Hope has made our knowledge about agriculture wider now, wider than before.

One farming method the women repeatedly mentioned that had been altered was casting seeds versus planting in rows, which they noticed immediately improved their yields. Woman 4 explained: ". . . what she learned from Field of Hope is a better method of farming. She used to just cast seeds, but . . . when Field of Hope comes and taught her how to plant seeds in rows, the yield is improving." Further, Woman 10 stated:

> Field of Hope has changed the community in such a way, that through their teaching, they have started to change the amount of yield. Planting seeds, they used to cast, but now, they plant them in rows. Later on, when they plant them in rows, they find out they have a good yield. At the end of the day, you get something bigger than the ones they used to get.

Field of Hope also provided tractor plowing for the women prior to one planting season. The organization sponsored the tractor service, and the women's group paid for the fuel. This made an impact on the women, and Woman 11 explained that it more than doubled her yield: "[W]hen Field of Hope gave them [the service of a] tractor, the maize, they used to get like seven sacks. That year was doubled and they got 18 sacks within a single season." Field of Hope has also periodically purchased improved seed for the women, as well as tools. Woman 11 described the impact of the improved seed:

> Field of Hope has helped her in this way - that when they came and bought for them seeds, it was sunflower seeds. So what happened was, they plant[ed] those seeds and harvest[ed] those seeds, and got money from it. So the very money they had, they used it to get potatoes. So those potatoes, after she sold the potatoes and got 500,000 UGX . . . the 500,000 UGX she used to build a kitchen. Now she has a kitchen where she is cooking from.

Theme #3: *Further aspirations for improved quality of life*

Although the women described economic improvements through the INGO's empowerment activities, they also discussed their desires for more economic changes and better livelihoods. Each woman interviewed, in some way, expressed a need or desire for more assistance to further raise their socioeconomic levels – through additional training, increased funding, and more farming inputs.

Need for greater income generation. Speaking to their desire to continue to make more income than before, the women offered ideas to encourage such through better marketing of produce and training for other vocations and businesses. These expressions directly related to their need for more funds to pay school fees and purchase amenities. Woman 11 explained: ". . . [W]hat they feel like is good for them, if they were to be given money to raise their level of income and to raise their business – it would be good to help them." Woman 2 added: ". . . Field of Hope could help them to raise their level of income, it would help them to save for their kids, for schooling, and help them for their health . . . ."

The women expressed a desire to add business skills to their agricultural skills. To this aim, Woman 2 said: ". . . [T]hey should add on the skills of farming and how to do

business . . . how to get a market for their goods and how to sell it." In addition, Woman 9 stated:

> So she's saying, one more thing that Field of Hope should help them [to do] is how to maintain their crops and sell their crops. If possible, they should be trained how to work with the cooperative society, thereby, when they plant a crop they can sell together. So if she has one bag and another person has a sack, another person one sack, they can bring it together and also look for better market where they can sell that product on a good price, a good high price.

To raise their income, many women discussed the possibility of additional vocational businesses other than farming. Woman 1 explained:

> She was asking if possible, they could get skills to do other things like making [a convenience kiosk] shop, making bread, and sell for themselves, so that one could help much. . . . [Farming] skills has helped, but now the season is now passing, and it is quite hard because it has been [a] long time without farming. So there is lack of food in the house, so as the program, as the skills have been given to them, they have been practicing but it has not helped them as fast as they could – but if they could be trained how to make money, that would be a better way.

As Woman 1 pointed out, the women experience a long dry season, typically November to February, in which not enough rainfall occurs to support crops, and little farming takes place. During this period, the family must survive on the income and production of their previous planting season. To address this need, Woman 4 also wanted an additional business to help her family. She said: "Five years coming, she would [hope to] have something that could help her family. . . . Business, some business when she is

out from home she can come and do after farming." She went on to say that as she ages, farming is more difficult, so "she wants something that she could be sitting down and sell because her age is growing older. That thing would help her." Income-generating ideas the women mentioned were baking bread, tailoring clothes, pottery making, or even owning shops in the village, such as bike repair or stores to sell goods.

Need for additional agricultural inputs. Also in an effort to improve their livelihoods and increase productivity, the women articulated great needs for better and improved agricultural inputs, because they recognized the relationship between improved inputs and increased outputs. To this point, Woman 1 explained: "She is saying, they highly need those things, like fertilizer, seeds, trainings, professional skills, and training for vocation[al] skills so they can also improve their lives." And Woman 5 expressed how these increased inputs would "change her life." She expressed: "Field of Hope should help her with tools, seeds that can help her to farm well, and change her life." In addition, Woman 2 described her desire to accumulate more land to increase levels of production and stated that at the time her household had "small land."

Along with direct inputs, mechanization of labor would also help, according to the women. Many expressed interest in tractor plowing after witnessing it through the program partially funded by Field of Hope, and perceived owning one for the group's use would be helpful. Woman 12 rationalized: "Giving us what to plow with [would help], our own, so that they can use it at any time." Woman 11 further explained the benefit of more efficient plowing:

> The challenge they have is that they do not have good things for plowing. Now, when you use your hand, this local digging, when they plow the garden locally

using their hands, there is not enough soil that has been dug up to rotate and make good money. So, the depth is just also as small as this, so planting, the plant root cannot enter, penetrate and go deep. It is quite hard for them. So it makes the plant to be dropped. It does not grow well, so afterwards the yield is not there.

With this increase of tools to improve productivity, the women conveyed a need for assistance and supplies related to post-harvest handling – mostly storage so that they could keep their produce safe while waiting for market prices to rise. Woman 10 clarified this view: “She's saying, also the challenge they have is storage. So if they could get somewhere where they could have the produce stored together, it could help them get to good markets and not waste money."

Woman 7 further explained:

Maybe they could train us on how to make good storage. How to store the cereals. When they come out of the garden sometimes they are cereals, sometimes they are not – but how to store them. How to go into the market now, [and] find a better market for it.

Woman 5 added to the need for post-harvest storage by stating that a machine to assist in agro-processing would ease this issue. She said:

. . . [B]ecause they are farmers, and if they plant maize and get good quality, if they can be provided with [a] machine that will help them to move the crops out of these, to remove the seeds and kept properly and safe.

Theme #4: *Ongoing challenges*

One area of the study’s findings related to the ongoing challenges the women perceived they would continue to face despite their efforts or that of the INGO. Three

subthemes explicated this aspect of the study's findings. These challenges were those they experienced due to their locality. Although these obstacles may not be resolved or entirely overcome, Field of Hope and other NGOs, whether international or GROs, should be cognizant of such to effectively help the women they seek to serve.

Burden and responsibility of paying school fees. As stated in the first theme, a grave importance was placed on children's education by the women. To ensure that education transpires, school fees must be paid. For many, this is a large undertaking and an expensive challenge always at the forefront of their minds. Woman 9 explained: "The challenges is studies. She wants the kids to go to good school, and now the good school demands much money, and they do not have. So that's the greatest challenge." Woman 8's comments harmonized with this position. She said: "All the money she has been getting she has been using to pay school fees. So the biggest challenge she's had was paying school fees."

These comments depict a large issue facing the women and their households. To end the poverty cycle, they found themselves selling produce at undesirable times to meet the need to put their children in school. Woman 10 expressed this burden:

> The greatest challenge is paying school fees. Because when they are to farm and have some good produce to sell, they don't have a good market, yet the school is demanding them to pay – so it is a big struggle in their life. Each time they get money, it goes to school fees, goes to school fees – they are incapable of buying anything [else].

For many women, only a few of their children could attend school, while others stayed home and helped with the household chores, due to the lack of funds. In this

instance, previous literature reported that it is typically the daughters who are kept back, as their education is not deemed as important as that of sons (FAO, 2011; Momsen, 2004; The ONE Campaign, 2015; The World Bank, 2013; The World Bank Group, 2016; USAID, 2017; Women Thrive Alliance, 2014).

Although many assume hunger is the predominant issue, Woman 4 argued that they can counteract such by growing their food. From her perspective, school fees were a larger issue. She explained:

> [H]ow she's going to send these kids to school is a challenge. Yeah, the issue of food she doesn't really think is much because they can farm to get it, but how to send the kids to school is a challenge.

Climate and weather volatility. One challenge especially sensitive in the northern region of Uganda, where the participants of this study reside, is that of climate and weather unpredictability. This was a particularly sensitive topic at the time of the interviews due to the drought that had plagued the region just prior to the researcher's visit during the summer of 2017. The volatility of the weather and unpredictable rain patterns played an integral part in the participants' agricultural successes, and thus their incomes for the year. Woman 7 described it this way:

> The first challenge is in the drought. Sometimes we don't get what we expect. Like last season we plant[ed] six acres, but we only get five bags because the drought had been so hard from January to June. So now we struggle to plant things, we don't get what we expect.

Prior to the interviews, Field of Hope had supplied each household with ten kilograms of food provisions because so many of their beneficiaries were struck by the

drought. As Woman 1 explained: ". . . in early this year [there was] still famine [in the area] because there was a lot of drought, so Field of Hope [helped us and] provided them with posho and beans." (Posho is a traditional food in Uganda, typically made from boiling maize or cassava flour in water.) Droughts and unforeseen climatic circumstances are hard on everyone, and leave many households unsure of how to manage their fields and crops. Woman 5 expressed the difficulty and said: "Unfortunately this last season, there was drought and not everyone plant[ed], and it was actually hard for everyone to know what advice to give each other."

Access to and affordability of health care. Living in a village in the rural part of Uganda is difficult because citizens are great distances from many amenities, including that of health care. Many women have to travel more than one hour to a health clinic and face the challenge of unreliable transport to reach that clinic. In cases of emergencies, this can prove to be catastrophic.

Woman 12 expressed a desire to acquire her own personal transport to serve others in granting them carriage to a hospital if needed. Living in the Dokolo district, her home is an estimated 20 kilometer walk from the closest taxi pick-up point, and then an additional 40-minute taxi ride to the nearest hospital. She explained:

> She's saying, first of all, the biggest problem that they do face is sickness. In this area, there is no means of transport when someone is sick to take them to hospital. So, she would like also to, if possible, she could have transport, so whenever there is someone that is sick or something happened, that person can be rushed to the hospital immediately to save their life.

Many participants voiced an issue of affording health care when sickness or an injury arises – many did not have that additional money readily available to purchase medicine and services. Although this is one purpose of the INGO-supported savings scheme, oftentimes timeliness is of the essence. Woman 2 explained: "Sometimes sickness is a surprise. Then, the challenges they have when this sickness comes, they look around and there is no other income they can take . . . ." This supports the subtheme *need for greater income generation* under theme three. To that point, Woman 1 expressed the benefit of owning animals:

> She is saying, right now, she doesn't have anything that can really help her when she is sick . . . [and] that's why she was saying if she could have [animals], then when she is sick she can sell one and help her to pay for hospital.

An additional consequence of this issue is a misdiagnosis of an illness in an effort to avoid the fees associated with seeing a medical professional. This can lead to purchasing and using a drug not intended for the specific illness at hand. Woman 8 described such a situation:

> She face[d] the challenge of illness because there would be no money. So with the orphans, it is quite hard for her to take a person to the hospital. If the sickness is there, you have to look for some small money and buy some medicine without the patient being taken in, and it doesn't have [a] prescri[ption], so you just have to buy the drug unknowingly to give to the person.

Theme #5: *Fear of Abandonment by the INGO*

These women interviewed had worked with Field of Hope for two years as of 2017. A sense of reliance on their services and relationship had formed; therefore,

leaving the women in fear of the time when the projects came to an end. This can be attributed to their sense of improvement through the INGO's programs, and also to their desire for further empowerment and self-improvement. Woman 3 expressed her desire for Field of Hope to stay: "She is saying, they should keep on coming to them to encourage them and give them skills so that they can go up." The women repeatedly mentioned the impact of the INGO's "encouragement."

The women expressed this fear through positive feelings, such as love and affection. Woman 6 said: ". . . . [S]he loves Field of Hope, they want them to come back to them always, and [give] plan[s to them] and whatever they bring for them is welcomed; they will be happy with it." Woman 11 also asked that Field of Hope continue to help them with "plans." Woman 7 expressed her desire for continued encouragement from Field of Hope:

> What I need most? Probably to encourage me and giving us the trainings. I was just saying I wish they would not leave us, they would continue with us, until they bring us out of the state we are in. We are still in a not good state, but they should go with us and encouraging us, training us encouraging us, training us until we come [up]. Because this way, we are encouraging ourselves, too, just with the cooperative.

Woman 1 also asked for Field of Hope to continue improving their lives. She stated: "[O]ne very important thing she wants to say is that since we came to them to help them, we should continue [to] help them so that they can have a good life." Woman 5 expanded that to include improvement of the whole community. She explained:

> She's saying, she wants Field of Hope to continue with them, so that when their life is changed, people in the community will look at them, and come with them, and they will make a bigger group in the society and the lives of people will be changed [for the better].

In addition, some women expressed a fear of abandonment once they were too old to farm. To this point, Woman 6 stated: ". . . [W]hatever Field of Hope give[s] them, they welcome. Because by so coming together with Field of Hope, they are free. One thing she asks for them is to keep her, because she is now growing old."

Findings as Related to the Study's Research Objectives

The themes derived from participants interviews aided in achieving this study's main research objectives. The five themes together capture the *essence* of these women's *lived experiences* regarding empowerment and their interactions with the INGO, Field of Hope. The study's related assertions and substantiations follow.

Research Objective #1

Describe the participants' experiences with regard to women's empowerment opportunities provided by an INGO in northern Uganda.

Assertion: Through their experiences with this program, women were able to purchase amenities they thought important, had increased agricultural yields, were able to support their children, and gained confidence and a sense of community. The interviews indicated that the women had gained self-esteem, witnessed inclusivity, perceived they now had a closer community, and were both economically and agriculturally empowered with better practices.

Substantiation: From the analysis of the data, one theme and four subthemes emerged (see Tables 3 & 4) and were used to explicate the study's findings in regard to research objective one: *empowerment and improved livelihoods as a result of INGO participation,* including *development of self-esteem, gender equity and inclusiveness, building community,* and *improved agricultural practices.*

Research Objective #2

Examine the participants' perceptions of the INGO and impact of its empowerment opportunities on women and their respective communities.

Assertion: During the interviews, many women discussed improvements to their economic livelihoods in relation to the INGO's operations within their areas. They attributed these improvements to increased agricultural productivity as well as access to savings accounts and loans. Although they expressed increases and their gratefulness for such, the women also continued to indicate the need for further economic support and improvement.

Participation of the women in the INGO's projects and the resulting empowerment and positive impacts had facilitated their reliance on its support. With this reliance, a fear of the project's termination also developed, which added to the women's perceptions of the project overall.

Substantiation: After thematic analysis of the study's data, one theme and two subthemes emerged (see Tables 3 & 4) in regard to research objective two: *fear of abandonment by the INGO,* as well as *economic empowerment* and the *need for greater income generation.*

Research Objective #3

Distill the *essence* of the participants' *lived experiences* in regard to their interactions with the INGO.

Assertion: The *essence* of these women's experiences is this: *Women participants of projects fostered by the INGO Field of Hope in Uganda, although feeling empowered based on increased perceptions of self-esteem, gender equity, sense of community, agricultural knowledge, and economic improvement, still faced ongoing challenges and aspired to further improve their livelihoods.* Their experiences exemplify a challenge faced by many NGOs, whether local or international, to empower beneficiaries while not encouraging their overdependence on the services and support they are provided.

Substantiation: All themes derived from the study's findings contributed to distilling its *essence* regarding the women's *lived experiences* resulting from their participation with the INGO, Field of Hope, in northern Uganda.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is a comprehensive summary of the study, including its problem statement, purpose, research objectives, supporting literature, participants, theoretical perspective, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Further, the chapter details conclusions and implications derived from study's findings, as well as related recommendations for research and practice going forward.

Summary of the Study

Problem Statement

The researcher aimed to identify *thematic links* in activities facilitated by INGOs and the empowerment of women in regard to the profitability of their agricultural endeavors. To support INGOs dedicated to improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Africa, especially women, a *deeper understanding* of the beneficiaries' personal needs, as well as the effectiveness of development agencies' existing practices, was needed.

Study's Purpose and Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore and derive meaning from the shared experiences of women who had participated in empowerment training programs in

Uganda, including related agro-entrepreneurship opportunities, through a phenomenological research approach. In addition, the study sought to examine the impact of these opportunities in regard to improving the livelihoods of the participants and others in their communities

The intent of this study was to execute a *fresh and naïve* look into women's empowerment, as facilitated by an INGO, and to encourage further research in and reflection on the phenomenon. The *question* or *problem* guiding this study was operationalized as three research objectives:

Objectives

1. Describe the participants' experiences with regard to women's empowerment opportunities provided by an INGO in northern Uganda;
2. Examine the participants' perceptions of the INGO and impact of its empowerment opportunities on women and their respective communities;
3. Distill the *essence* of the participants' *lived experiences* in regard to their interactions with the INGO.

Review of Literature

The researcher studied relevant literature to gain knowledge and insight on the topics of this qualitative inquiry. The major sections included in the literature review were poverty in SSA (The World Bank, 2013), poverty in Uganda (Ali et al., 2015; The World Bank, 2016b), gender roles in poverty and agriculture (Ali et al., 2015; Ben-Ari, 2014; FAO, 2011, 2014; Momsen, 2004; Odame et al., 2002; O'Sullivan et al., 2014; The ONE Campaign, 2015; Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010; Yeboah et al., 2018), NGOs, including INGOs, and agricultural development in SSA (Barr & Fafchamps, 2005;

Osirim, 2001; Shrum, 2000; United Nations, 2017; Uphoff, 1993), rural women's empowerment in agriculture (Alkire et al., 2013; Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Ben-Ari, 2014; Cho, 2014; FAO, 2011; Lecoutere, 2017; Momsen, 2004; Odame et al., 2002; O'Sullivan et al., 2014; The ONE Campaign, 2015; USAID, 2017; Yeboah et al., 2018), modes of empowerment for women (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010; Lecoutere, 2017; Majurin, 2012; O'Sullivan et al., 2014; Otero, 1999; Selinger, 2008), and Field of Hope, the INGO under study (Field of Hope Organization, 2017; M. Hafner, personal correspondence, July 2, 2017; Sasakawa Africa Association, n.d.). The literature (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016; Reeves et al., 2008) was also referenced to aid in the development of this study's theoretical perspective.

Theoretical Perspective

A blend of two theories guided this study. Both critical theory and feminist theory focus on human relationships and social interaction. According to Fay (1987), critical theory is "concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender" (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 29).The intent of critical theory is to "critique and challenge, to transform, and to analyze" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 59) the relationships and motivations of those people, organizations, or communities under study. It was the aim that, as a result of this investigation, the effectiveness of the INGO's program and projects will be enhanced, thus leading to the empowerment of its women participants.

Feminist theory poses questions relating to "the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 28). Lather stated that the objectives of feminist theory are to "correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in

ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position" (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 28). Its relevance to this study was in recognizing the existence of gender inequality in the northern region of Uganda, and then analyzing the actions of the INGO to *correct* such inequalities. Both perspectives push for empowerment and equality, considering the motivations of an individual to surpass unwarranted preconceptions, and justified their compilation as the study's theoretical perspective.

Participants

The study's participants were selected based on the suggestions of key informants (Rogers, 2003) who were familiar with Field of Hope's program and projects. Key informants are those within a social system who "are especially knowledgeable about the networks in the system" (Rogers, 2003, p. 310). In regard to Field of Hope's women's program, key informants included the program coordinator, district coordinators who organize the groups and interface with the program coordinator, pastors who aid in communication among groups and coordinators, and chairpersons of the women's groups, i.e., persons similar to presidents of organized groups.

Two groups' chairpersons solicited for volunteers from the women's group as a whole, and, in the remaining two groups, a key informant identified likely candidates and the women were approached to volunteer. Twelve SHWFs volunteered to be interviewed; all were living in the northern region of Uganda and active participants in the women's empowerment group and Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) program sponsored by Field of Hope and its partners.

Data Collection

Twelve semi-structured interviews were guided by an open-ended questions protocol, as conducted in August of 2017. The interview protocol was developed by the researcher and Oklahoma State University faculty (see Appendix D). The semi-structured interview format was less formal and allowed the researcher to ask additional questions as seen fit for the participants' circumstances and responses (Teijlingen, 2014). Both an iPhone and an iPad were used to record the interviews to ensure accuracy for transcription.

The researcher conducted observations and maintained reflexivity (Tracy, 2010) to ensure the study's rigor and depth regarding the study's findings, along with keeping a field notes journal throughout the interviews. The researcher's observations alternated from passive to balanced to participatory depending on the circumstances and activities of the group (Creswell & Poth, 2016). A translator was used by 11 of the 12 women because they were not fluent in the researcher's language, English. The translator translated in third person in accord with the recommendation of Edwards (1998) to accurately represent the experiences of these women and their interactions with the INGO, Field of Hope.

Data Analysis

The SHWFs' interviews were compiled, along with my reflections and observations. Through this data compilation, I was able to construct an understanding of the participants' *lived experiences* regarding Field of Hope's empowerment projects (Creswell & Poth, 2016). I gathered and transcribed the data and transcriptions, reviewed it and highlighted by hand "'significant statements,' sentences, or quotes" (Creswell &

Poth, 2016, p. 79). This was done with the aim to provide a description and understanding of the women's experiences with the INGO. These *significant statements* were transformed into themes or *clusters of meaning* (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Moustakas, 1994) to be analyzed further through coding.

As Yin (2016) described, coding is using phrases and words of the interviewees to *capture the meaning* of the data and the women's overall experiences. This analytic procedure is considered open coding (Yin, 2016), during which the researcher relates the data to "broader conceptual issues" (p. 196). Thereafter, axial coding was conducted to capture recurring patterns found across the data that represented the study's potential emergent themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Note-taking and memoing were also done during coding to create lists of connections and assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016) and to "reflect on the larger thoughts presented in the data" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 188). Two separate Excel documents were created to organize the codes and supporting statements, along with the emergent themes that arose.

The emergent themes were then used to develop theoretical statements representing the "significance of interpretations and conclusions in relation to the literature and previous studies" (Yin, 2016, p. 199). These *themes* were analyzed to *describe*, *classify,* and *interpret* the data (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Next, colleagues and mentors were asked to analyze the themes and codes and derive their own assumptions about the data. Following their analysis, we discussed the themes to develop a *thick description* and *deep understanding* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the women's *lived experiences* and to ensure accurate representation of such within the final themes and subthemes derived from the data.

Conclusions and Implications

The interviews of 12 women were analyzed and coded from which five themes and multiple subthemes were derived. The five emergent themes were *securing children's futures through education, empowerment and improved livelihoods as a result of INGO participation, further aspirations for improved quality of life, ongoing challenges,* and *fear of abandonment by the INGO.* The first theme, *securing children's futures through education,* included one subtheme: *belief that a better future is directly related to education.* The theme *empowerment and increased livelihoods as a result of INGO participation* was supported by five subthemes: *development of self-esteem; gender equity and inclusiveness; building community; economic empowerment;* and *improved agricultural practices.* The third theme, *further aspirations for improved quality of life,* encompasses two subthemes: *need for greater income generation* and *need for additional agricultural inputs.* The theme *ongoing challenges* included three subthemes: *burden and responsibility of paying school fees; climate and weather volatility;* and *access to and affordability of health care.* The final theme, *fear of abandonment by the INGO,* revealed no inherent subthemes.

The theme of *securing children's futures through education* refers to the persistent concern the women had about putting their children in school, and their belief that children pursuing education will lead to improved livelihoods later in their lives. Most of the women interviewed only achieved a primary level of education (see Table 1). During VSLA meetings and in the interviews, the women consistently mentioned their children's school attendance, deemed that a personal goal, and, if achieved, a successful outcome.

The subtheme of *belief that a better future for their children is directly related to education* displayed the women's insistence on their children attending school to ensure they have a successful and *better future* compared to their parents. Many associated more knowledge with improved livelihoods, and often attributed their life of poverty to the lack of education.

The theme *empowerment and improved livelihoods as a result of INGO participation* indicated the positive reactions of the women to their personal involvement with the group and its programs. The women discussed feelings of improved self-esteem, and appreciated the inclusiveness demonstrated and the strengthening of community ties associated with their participation in Field of Hope's activities. They mentioned economic empowerment through savings and described their improved agricultural practices.

The subtheme *development of self-esteem* indicated the women's perceptions of improved self-confidence and self-empowerment, and their pride of being women in their households who participate in decision-making and have the responsibility of keeping their households and families well. This subtheme also attests to their improved skills, not only in agriculture but also in their ability to communicate and sense of professionalism.

The subtheme *gender equity and inclusiveness* is related to the involvement of male participants in the projects' groups, not as threats to the women's empowerment but rather as encouragement and support, including furthering a sense of *community*. The women also mentioned the differences among the group members, such as religious

beliefs, tribal heritage, age and backgrounds, but emphasized the unity and relationships formed despite their differences.

The subtheme *building community* built on the previous subtheme in that the women explained their feelings of belonging and harmonious accord with the other members of their groups. In meetings, it was obvious that, though they may not have been close in personal terms, they acted as a unit and as a community and had equal expectations for all members. They openly encouraged one another and counted on all members to participate for their own self-improvement and the group's betterment.

The subtheme *economic empowerment* emanated from the increases in yields and production the women found in their gardens, and also the convenience and benefits of the savings because they were able to use such in *hard times*. During times of increased yields, and, therefore, more sales, the women were able to use the extra money to construct outdoor kitchens and buy better seed for the next growing seasons, as two examples.

The theme *further aspirations for improved quality of life* reveals the women's desires to achieve more financially and materially in the future. Even though they recognized the improvements already made, the women articulated needs for additional progress to reach a higher socioeconomic status and enhanced financial security.

The subtheme *need for greater income generation* supports the theme of improved livelihoods, as many women discussed alternative ways to increase their incomes and ways in which Field of Hope could help them do that. Within this subtheme, women included tasks such as better marketing of garden produce and training for

additional vocational skills. Many of them worried about the day they could not physically labor in the garden and the uncertainty of their incomes as a result.

The subtheme *need for additional agricultural inputs* indicated the women's perceived needs for more efficient inputs of higher quality, including better seed and fertilizer, more mechanized methods of plowing, i.e., a tractor, acquiring farm animals to breed and sell for cash, increased methods of post-harvest storage, and access to more land. All input increases are related to generating higher yields, and, subsequently, greater income to pay their children's school fees and to purchase household amenities.

The theme *ongoing challenges* related to the problems and obstacles these women faced due to their location. These challenges appeared to be inherent or *inevitable* due to their physical environment, as well as existing socio-cultural norms. To understand the experiences of these women within and outside of the INGO's program, one must comprehend the challenges they encounter each day. The women spoke of these as being unavoidable and needing to compensate in other areas of their lives, including increased income generation, to effectively overcome such.

The subtheme *burden and responsibility of paying school fees* represents the constant trials women and families face to put their children through school in northern Uganda. They voiced a consistent worry of not being able to provide for their children's education. Despite an increase in income or productivity, this issue continued to burden the women.

The subtheme *climate and weather volatility* expresses the persistent issue of drought and climate extremes as non-conducive to the women's agricultural pursuits. Drought has become more prevalent in the northern region of Uganda (The World Bank

Group, 2016), and the women described how the hardships of drought and dramatic climate variability impeded on their livelihoods, especially in the immediate planting season prior to the study's interviews. The droughts were also hard because of their unpredictability. Oftentimes, women would purchase seed and plant their crops, but then be disappointed when it failed to rain, thus losing their investments.

The subtheme *access to and affordability of health care* explicated the women's struggle to afford adequate health care, assuming they are even able to access it. This subtheme further explored the lack of infrastructure, such as transportation and health care clinics, and the struggles women face in finding transport to facilities not near to them. The women expressed fears of giving their children or elderly parents medicine that had not been specifically prescribed for them because of the unavailability or unaffordability of professional medical services.

The final theme, *fear of abandonment by the INGO,* referred to the women's worries about their welfare and livelihoods after termination of the development agency's efforts. Women spoke appreciatively of its impact and repeatedly expressed their wishes for continued support from Field of Hope. These comments typically followed statements referring to the unknown completion timeline of the sponsored projects within their respective districts and the uncertainties they felt. This theme exemplified a dependence developed by the women on the services and assistance of the INGO, which is not sustainable. Other themes and subthemes, such as *economic empowerment* and *need for greater income generation*, can aid in lessening dependence on the INGO's services, and help ease this fear of abandonment. By continuing to improve their livelihoods, and develop needed vocational and business skills to do such, the women can experience

more stable sources of income, and realize their ability to thrive independently of external actors.

Discussion

This study's findings supported its theoretical perspective, which was a combination of critical theory and feminist theory. Both have foundations in empowerment and the actions of persons "transcending the constraints placed on them" (Fay, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2016). In this study, the women's perspectives were carefully considered, as their livelihoods and interpretations of such were altered by their society's views on the roles of women (Creswell & Poth, 2016). It was demonstrated that the women participants in the INGO's program worked to *transcend the constraints* of northern Uganda's gender rules (Roberts & Edwards, 2017). Whereas critical theory gave way to "critique and challenge, to transform, and to analyze" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 59) the gender inequality of the women, feminist theory recognized the intent of the women's empowerment program to "correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position," according to Lather (as cited in Creswell & Poth, p. 28). The women's voluntary participation in the group exemplified their recognition of the gender disparity they faced, and their aspirations, along with the INGO's support and encouragement to overcome those preconceptions to *correct*, or at least mitigate, such inequalities. By developing "collaborative and nonexploitative" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 28) relationships with the participants during her two-month stay in Uganda, the researcher was able to lessen the impact of social power relations between herself and the interviewees, and "avoid

objectification" (p. 28), satisfying the goals of both critical theory and feminist theory perspectives.

The themes derived from the interviews also worked to support the theory base. The second theme of *empowerment and improved livelihoods as a result of INGO participation* exemplified the movement facilitated by the INGO to *correct* the gender disparities within the women's communities. The theme *further aspirations for improved quality of live* evokes critical theory in that the women beneficiaries of the INGO projects began to *envision new possibilities* (Fay, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2016). This theme, along with the other themes *securing children's futures through education* and *ongoing challenges*, demonstrated critical theory by helping the women to "examine the conditions of their existence" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 29).

This study contributed to the literature by *giving voice* to the beneficiaries of an INGO-sponsored empowerment program in northern Uganda. The findings reported on the *lived experiences* of the women and gave insight to the best practices and realistic goals of NGOs, including INGOs, working in women's empowerment, specifically in SSA. The *essence* derived from this study the beneficiaries' perspective adds to the literature, and states: *Women participants of projects fostered by the NGO Field of Hope in Uganda, although feeling empowered based on increased perceptions of self-esteem, gender equity, sense of community, agricultural knowledge, and economic improvement, still faced ongoing challenges and aspired to further improve their livelihoods.* The findings also support the INGO's need to be sensitive to the women's fears of abandonment by it and their loss of services and support. This is a common challenge for many INGOs across the world.

Because Uganda is a country focused on its southern region, with most official government activity and commerce occurring in the more populated areas of southern Uganda, the participants in this study, living in the northern region, represented a lack of access to governmental resources. This can be seen in the *ongoing challenges* theme and subsequent subthemes. The literature also supports this observation (Ali et al., 2015; The World Bank, 2016b). In terms of agriculture, this inequitable distribution of resources also impedes development of a stable value-addition system. With a lack of reliable infrastructure and human capital, the cost of successfully marketing any agricultural product is increased if not untenable.

Based on the analysis and interpretation of interviews with 12 women participants in Field of Hope's programs in Uganda, this study adds their voice to the literature regarding empowerment through involvement in such programming and recognizes the ongoing needs that still remain. This investigation also provides recommendations for future research and practice (see Table 5) to provide a framework for the INGO's future work in regard to empowering women in Uganda and other LDCs in SSA.

Table 5. *Recommendations based on Themes and Subthemes*

Theme #	Theme and Subthemes	Recommendations	
		Research	**Practice**
THEME 1	***Securing children's futures through education*** *Belief that a better future is directly related to education*	• Assess whether involvement in an INGO empowerment project promotes school enrollment of participants' children.	
THEME 2	***Empowerment and improved livelihoods as a result of INGO participation*** *Development of self-esteem* *Gender-equity and inclusiveness* *Building community* *Economic empowerment* *Improved agricultural practices*	• Investigate perceptions of the participants' spouses on gender equity and the empowerment of their wives after involvement with INGO-sponsored empowerment projects. • Analyze the economic impact of INGO empowerment projects on households and communities. • Investigate improvements in agricultural productivity and knowledge capacity.	• INGOs and other external actors involved in women's empowerment programs should continually assess and evaluate on their services. • INGOs should use participatory approaches in their development work. • INGOs working in empowerment should utilize the WEAI to measure the success of their programs.
THEME 3	***Further aspirations for improved quality of life*** *Need for greater income generation* *Need for additional agricultural inputs*	•Investigate improvements in agricultural productivity and knowledge capacity.	• INGOs should use participatory approaches in their development work. • INGOs should create network ties to other development agencies to aid in providing additional services to their beneficiaries.
THEME 4	***Ongoing challenges*** *Burden and responsibility of paying school fees* *Climate and weather volatility* *Access to and affordability of health care*		• NGOs should create network ties to other development agencies to aid in providing additional services to their beneficiaries.
THEME 5	***Fear of abandonment by the INGO***	• Evaluate which NGO-sponsored activities inspire dependency on service over an empowerment of self.	• NGOs should use a participatory approaches in their development work. • INGOs should communicate clearly and effectively in regard to their strategic plan and intentions after project termination.

Recommendations for Future Research

Much of the literature cited in this study stated that empowering women will have a direct and substantial impact on the economies of their countries, as well as the world, e.g., OECD Council, 2012; USAID, 2015; and World Economic Forum and FAO, 2013. More specifically, this literature demonstrated that empowering women in the agricultural sector could stimulate that aspect of the economy, and also reduce world hunger (FAO, 2011; Lecoutere, 2017; O'Sullivan et al., 2014: The ONE Campaign, 2015; The World Bank, 2016a; USAID, 2015; Yeboah et al., 2018). Although this study did not quantitatively analyze the economic impact of such empowerment, it is recommended that such be assessed in the future on both household and community-wide scales.

Another quantitative analysis recommended by the researcher is to investigate improvements in agricultural productivity of women participants in similar empowerment projects. Literature has continually showed that women suffer from a lack of agricultural productivity compared to men, sometimes due to their lack of inputs but, at times, in spite of such (Ali et al., 2015; O'Sullivan et al., 2014; Quisumbing & Pandolfelli, 2010). As global actors work to empower women in agriculture, it is important to understand if involvement in an agriculturally based INGO's empowerment program aids in increasing agricultural productivity and, thereby, reduces food insecurity. Along the same line, an analysis of the agricultural capacity built by such programs should be conducted, i.e., determining if the organization's agricultural trainings significantly increased the agricultural knowledge and skills of its participants.

In addition to analyzing an INGO's impact on agriculutral productivity, the researcher encourages further analysis be conducted on the relationship between mothers participating in an INGO's women empowerment program and their children's enrollment in school. As part of this study, the women emphasized the desire of putting their children in school as a motivating factor for involvement with Field of Hope, and that being one of the largest challenges they faced. Further research, therefore, should assess whether INGO empowerment projects promote school enrollment of participants' children. In addition, a study should analyze the likelihood of girls' enrollment increasing and being sustained after the involvement of their mothers in women's empowerment projects, such as Field of Hope's programming. Other studies have shown that the likelihood of such increased when a mother's access to funds increased (Ben-Ari, 2014; The ONE Campaign, 2015).

Further studies should also investigate the perceptions of the participants' spouses on gender equity and the empowerment of their wives after involvement with INGO-sponsored empowerment projects. Given that they, too, are often directly involved in the projects, an assessment of their pre- and post-intervention perceptions, especially in regard to gender roles and related issues of equality (Ali et al., 2015; Dancer & Hossain, 2017; FAO, 2011; Momsen, 2004; Odame et al., 2002; O'Sullivan et al., 2014; The ONE Campaign, 2015; USAID, 2015)., should be conducted.

Based on the findings of this study, it is also recommended that further inquiry occur regarding the women's fear of abandonment by the INGO. Rahman (2006) stated that many INGOs in Bangladesh had shifted from mobilization of their beneficiaries to "service delivery" (p. 468). This service delivery inspired dependence of the beneficiaries

instead of mobilizing their "social change directly through activism" (Rahman, 2006, p. 468). Research should be undertaken to determine which INGO-sponsored activities inspires this dependency on service over an empowerment of self, and subsequently stimulates a sense of fear regarding termination of the agency's services.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Based on the study's findings, the researcher recommends that INGOs and other external actors involved in women's empowerment programs continually evaluate their programs to ensure efficient, sustainable, and impactful practices are occurring and objectives are being achieved. Holma and Kontinen (2011) stated:

> [However, i]t is not sufficient for an INGO to merely know whether a project has met its objectives, but, rather, the learning objective presumes that the evaluation goes beyond the surface of the projects in order to examine what actually made the project successful, or not, in a certain context. (p. 182)

INGOs and other actors should routinely assess and evaluate their projects to determine what is working and what is not, and make adjustments accordingly.

In addition, INGOs should explore *participatory approaches* (Zimmerman, 1995) to their development work. Barr and Fafchamps (2005) conducted a study of community satisfaction with INGO services in Uganda and found that "[b]oth a permanent NGO presence in the client-community and community involvement in NGO decision-making raise client community satisfaction" (p. 635). By enlisting this approach, INGOs are able to provide avenues for the oftentimes *silenced voices* of their women participants to be heard (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010).

Those INGOs working to foster women's empowerment in LDCs should consider using Feed the Future's WEAI (Alkire et al., 2013), to comparatively analyze the production, resources, income, leadership, and time of their beneficiaries pre- and post-project. This tool may help development organizations quantify the empowerment of their women participants and aid in improving the effectiveness of their projects. This method could also assist in assessing what specific areas of empowerment within a project are weaker or create less of an impact despite the INGO's efforts, and support changes to their strategic plans to correct such shortcomings.

In terms of direct program outputs, development agencies should consider tapping into their own networks to create ties for beneficiaries to other organizations and resources to assist them with issues outside of the referring entities' work, such as groups poviding health or educational services. In addition, INGOs working in women's empowerment should include programs to build business and skills capacity to increase their beneficiaries' incomes, or, alternatively, provide a plan for a market niché that stands to generate greater monetary returns, e.g., through value-addition schemes. McMullen (2010) described *development entrepreneurship* as an aspect of social entrepreneurship "that focuses on entrepreneurial activity occurring at the nexus of the three scholarly domains . . . business entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, and institutional entrepreneurship" (p. 186). This idea or approach works to lift individuals out of poverty through entrepreneurial practices, and translates well to the development work of Field of Hope and other INGOs. By taking this *developmental entrepreneurship* approach, INGOs may more effectively help beneficiaries raise their income levels, and, ultimately, their socio-economic statuses.

Finally, development agencies, including INGOs, should be aware of their beneficiaries' fear of abandonment and be cognizant of such when operating their programs. Clearly and effectively communicating to beneficiaries the agencies' strategic plans and future intentions, especially following the termination, or end, of their services and projects should be a priority. Their plans or exit strategies should be communicated from the initiation of all programs and any course corrections or significant changes made clear to participants, as such may arise.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNITED NATIONS MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Millennium Development Goals

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development
   (United Nations, 2018)

APPENDIX B

UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Sustainable Development Goals

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

    (United Nations, 2015)

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Tuesday, August 8, 2017
IRB Application No	AG1736
Proposal Title:	The phenomena of women empowerment projects fostered by NGOs in Uganda
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 8/7/2020

Principal Investigator(s):

Alexa Major
Stillwater, OK 74078

Michael Craig Edwards
456 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☐ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Scott Hall (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX D

STUDY'S INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Women Participant Interview Questions/Prompts

1. What is your age?
2. Where do you live? Town/Village/Elsewhere
3. Could you please share with me an estimate of how much income you are able to earn in a year from your projects?
    a. How much of your total yearly income can you associate with projects related to your work with (NGO)
4. Can you tell me what level of school you have achieved?
    a. Primary,
    b. Lower secondary (Ordinary Level)
    c. Upper secondary (Advanced Level)
    d. Diploma course - (2-year associate's degree)
    e. Bachelor's degree
    f. Other (specify)
5. Are you married, single or widowed?
    a. How many people do you live with in your home?
    b. How many children do you have? Boys? Girls?
        i. How many of these children are still going to school?
6. What is your ethnic group or tribe?
7. Do you receive assistance from any NGOs?
    a. Can you tell me what assistance you receive?
8. What are your three most critical needs at this time?
    a. What needs are not being met at this time?
    b. What challenges do you face?
9. What needs have the NGOs met?
10. In what community activities do you participate?
    a. In what community activities have the NGOs initiated/participated?
11. How many households in your community participate in the NGO?
12. For how long have you received services from (the appropriate NGO)?
13. How did you discover the (NGO's) projects?
    a. Did a friend lead you to (NGO)? A family member? Someone else?

    b. Did (NGO) contact you first?

14. Tell me about your agricultural/business operation
    a. Who owns the assets (land/livestock/seed/building/etc.)?
    b. Who works the business (field/livestock/storefront/market stall)?
    c. If you have employees, how many?
        i. Full-time? Casual?
    d. What do you produce to sell?
    e. How much do you sell at/on the market? What is your income?
15. When a problem arises with your operation, whom do you ask for help/advice?
    a. What have you asked them for help with recently?
16. What is your daily routine?
17. What about your life would you like to change for your children?
18. Do you think your children's prospects/futures will be better than yours?
    a. How?
    b. Why?
19. Can you describe in what ways (NGO) helps you?
    a. What have you learned from (NGO)?
    b. Has (NGO) changed your community?
20. How often do you come into contact with (NGO) in a week/month/year?
21. How has working with the (NGO) changed your business?
22. Have you seen any economic benefit from working with (NGO)?
23. In what areas do you wish you had more help/education/training?
24. What are the most important results that you have achieved in the last five years?
25. What do you hope to achieve in the next five years?

APPENDIX E

TRANSLATOR CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

The phenomena of women empowerment projects fostered by NGOs in Uganda

TRANSLATOR CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Researchers: Ms. Alexa M. Major; M. Craig Edwards, PhD

(This form may be used for individuals hired to conduct specific research tasks. e.g.. transcribing, interpreting. translating, entering data, shredding data.)

I, Regan Adoko, will be conducting specific tasks such as transcribing, interpreting, translating, entering data, and/or copying data from this research project.

I agree to:

1. Keep all research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the Researcher(s).
2. Keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. Return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the Researcher(s) when I have completed the research tasks.

Date: 27th/07/2017

Regan Adoko
(Print name)

(Signature)

.....

Researcher(s)

Date: 7/25/17

Alexa M. Major
(Print name)

(Signature)

M. Craig Edwards
(Print name)

(Signature)

VITA

Alexa Mackenzie Major

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE PHENOMENON OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROJECTS FOSTERED BY THE INGO FIELD OF HOPE IN NORTHERN UGANDA

Major Field: International Agriculture

Biographical:

Education:
Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in International Agriculture at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2018.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Communications at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas in 2016.

Experience:
Program Management Intern, Field of Hope 07/2017-05/2018

- Represented Field of Hope at project sites throughout northern Uganda.
- Assisted in project management and strategic planning of women's groups, children's gardens, and agricultural curriculum development.
- Aided in external and internal communication efforts.

Graduate Assistant, Oklahoma State University 05/2017-07/2017

- Assisted in management and execution of social media efforts promoting the Mandela Washington Fellowship at Oklahoma State University.
- Hosted, taught, and directed 25 African fellows through daily activities associated with business and entrepreneurship training.

Graduate Assistant, Oklahoma State University 06/2016-06/2017

- Supported Dr. Shida Henneberry, Regent's Professor, by grading, planning, and working with students enrolled in International Trade, International Agriculture Seminar, and Diversity in Agriculture courses.
- Managed the Master of International Agriculture Program's media and communications material, both print and online.
- Recruited undergraduate students to the program and conducted program visits and tours.

Professional Memberships:
Alpha Lambda Delta/Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society: member since 2013
Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education: member since 2018