

The womens
cooperative program
health and social care
essay



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MethodologyThis chapter begins with giving an overview of the larger research project which the present study is part of and to which it is meant to contribute, followed by the objectives and research questions of this study. Next, an introduction to the theoretical framework used to guide this study is given. Afterwards information on the study location, the partner organization and the study sample is provided, followed by the research approach, the methods used for data collection and details about the data analysis. At last the research limitations and the researcher's role within this study are exposed.

Setting of this Study within the Larger Research Project

The present study is situated within the larger research project " Food security and right to adequate food in the context of land and agrarian reform in South Africa" led by Dr. Stefanie Lemke at the Institute of Social Science in Agriculture, Department for Gender and Nutrition, University of Hohenheim in Germany, through whom the access of this study to the field of research was feasible. The larger research project investigates the impact of land and agrarian reform on food and nutrition security in South Africa, with a focus on the impact on local food systems and marginalized vulnerable groups, as are emerging farmers, farm workers and women among them (Lemke 2010). Emphasis is being laid on the perspectives and capacity of these groups. The research of the larger project is being carried out in the provinces Limpopo, North West and Western Cape in collaboration with local Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and South African universities for a period of 4 years (2010 until 2014). The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach also serves as a theoretical framework of

the larger research project (for further information see Lemke 2010).

Simultaneously the present study is a continuation of the study carried out by Ana Eisermann in 2010 which assessed women agricultural cooperatives as a strategy to empower women in order to achieve food security and promote a healthy livelihood (Eisermann 2011). The field work of this study took place at the same partner organization and focused the same program as the previous study. A brief description of the partner organization as well as of the program is given later on.

Objectives and Research Questions of the Present Study

The objectives of the present study were based on the findings and recommendations of the previous study by Eisermann (2011) mentioned above. The overall objective of this thesis was to assess the progress since the previous study of the women participating in an agricultural cooperatives program aiming to achieve food security and to promote women's empowerment. Emphasis of this study was laid on women's motivation to join the cooperatives program as well as on social relations and processes of decision making within the groups and between them and the partner organization. Moreover, this study was carried out in tandem with another Master student who assessed the institutional and governance factors that affect smallholder agricultural cooperatives focusing on the transforming structures & processes component of the SLF (Ndoping 2012). Therefore, this study focused on the other components of the SLF and it was not intended to focus on aspects such as marketing or access to markets. The specific objectives and research questions of this study are as follow: 1. Progress of the cooperatives since the last study was carried out in 2010- Focus on

access to land, production activities and livelihood outcomes². What is the impact of the WFP cooperative program on women's empowerment and on the livelihood outcomes of their members? 3. What is the motivation of women to participate in the WFP Cooperative program? 4. How is WFP perceived by the women participating in the WFP Cooperative program?- What are the relationships and processes of decision-making between WFP and the cooperative members?- How do the women perceive the role of WFP?- How do the women perceive the activities of WFP with regard to monitoring and evaluate the development of the cooperative? 5. How are cooperatives being monitored and evaluated by WFP?

Theoretical Framework of this Thesis

A theoretical framework based on the " Sustainable Livelihood Framework" develop by DFID (1999) (Error: Reference source not found) and the " Women Empowerment Framework" developed by Kabeer (1999) was developed to guide this research study. The " Sustainable Livelihood Framework" and the " Women Empowerment Framework" were merged into one framework and adjusted to the present study (Error: Reference source not found). This was inspired by Eisermann (2011), who integrated these two frameworks first; and adapted accordingly for the present study. The resulted framework contains elements from both frameworks and the elements from the different frameworks that are equivalent to each other were placed together, as for example, " resources" and " achievements" from the " Women Empowerment Framework" are equivalent to the " livelihood assets" and " outcomes" from the " Sustainable Livelihood Framework" respectively. The three resources (human, social and economic)

identified in the women empowerment framework correspond to the five assets in the sustainable livelihood framework with the distinction of the economic capital into physical, financial and natural capital. All the different elements, their complex relations and inter-dependencies are illustrated in Error: Reference source not found and will be briefly explained. The vulnerability context is closely linked to the structures and processes and is affected by them, either by being limited or even enhanced. Once it is identified, in many cases first identified by an NGO, the aim is to reduce the vulnerability context as well as to achieve desirable livelihood outcomes. In order to do so diverse activities or strategies are implemented, which in turn are based on and influenced by the available assets. Additionally, both, the strategies and the access to assets are shaped by the structures and processes as well (Baumann 2000). An important aspect, looking at the women's dynamic empowerment process of the graphic is the agency dimension, which is about the ability to define own goals, act upon them and make decisions (Kabeer 1999). Applying the framework to this study as an example, the vulnerability context of the female farm workers consists of food insecurity, unemployment, missing job alternatives, gender inequality and discrimination, along with other factors. Desirable outcomes would be food security, to create job opportunities, right's awareness, increasing women's self-confidence, generate an income, economic independency, achieve gender equality, access to land, etc. The implemented activities in order to achieve the desired outcomes are mushrooms and vegetable production within the formed agricultural cooperative. This is facilitated by one organization, the NGO WFP, which is affecting their access to the different assets by improving these in an ideal case. A second framework <https://assignbuster.com/the-womens-cooperative-program-health-and-social-care-essay/>

(Error: Reference source not found) based on the women's empowerment framework developed by Kabeer 1999 and on the methodology developed by the Commission on Women and Development was also adapted for this study in order to follow the developments in the empowerment process achieved with the external cooperation of the NGO WFP (Charlier and Caubergs 2007). According to the diagram there are four stages in the process of the women's empowerment. The first stage is the "baseline", which is the initial situation regarding the access to resources before a program is launched. The second stage is the "program input" which refers to the strategies, activities and resources (economic, human and social) implemented and should contribute to the women's empowerment. The third stage are the "results of a program" during and after it which should result in an increased ability of women to choose and in achievements made such as increased economic power, women's knowledge, self-confidence and involvement in decision-making. The last stage is the "impact of a program", which are changes made in the longer term in order to improve women's quality of life and achieve gender equality (Charlier and Caubergs 2007). Finally, the agency dimension from the women's empowerment framework must not be ignored when measuring empowerment (Kabeer 1999).

Research Context

Study Location and Partner Organization

The field work of the present study was carried out in collaboration with the South African Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Women on Farms Project (WFP), based in Stellenbosch, Western Cape, South Africa (Error: Reference source not found), from early March until late May 2012. Women

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on Farms Project (WFP) was founded in 1996 with the vision of a society that respect women who live and work on farms and treats them with dignity (WFP 2009a). Strengthening the capacity of those women to claim their rights and fulfill their needs is core of WFP's mission (WFP 2009c). Therefore, the heart of its work lies on providing training and capacity building, advocacy and lobbying, raise of awareness and support for the self-organization of female farm workers (WFP 2009c). Since 2008 WFP has established themselves as a feminist organization putting a strong feminist emphasis in their work and programs. According to the needs of women in the area and in order to contribute to its vision and mission, different programs were formed. There are currently five different programs: Women's Cooperatives, Women's Health and Empowerment Program (WHEP), Women's Labour Rights, Women's Land & Housing and a Young Women's program (WFP 2009b). A description of the women's cooperative program is given below.

The Women's Cooperative Program

According to the current deputy Director of WFP the women's cooperative program was envisaged to address in the first place food security of women who experience hunger routinely and to generate surpluses in order to create an independent income as a job alternative in rural areas. Using the local knowledge of the women as a resource already available and by facilitating women's access to land and agricultural production the program would create a model of women working cooperatively and collectively that would additionally challenge the dominant land use model, where large land holdings are owned by a single farmer, who typically is a man (WFP 2009d).

The first cooperative was established in 2006 in the Stellenbosch area. There are currently three cooperative under this program: The Rawsonville, the Ceres and the Stellenbosch cooperative.

Study Sample: The Rawsonville, Ceres and Stellenbosch Cooperatives

The main target groups of analyses were three cooperatives currently assisted by WFP, the Rawsonville, the Ceres and Stellenbosch cooperatives (Error: Reference source not found). The Rawsonville and Ceres cooperatives were units of analyses of the previous study done by Ana Eisermann in 2010. While two other different groups of women in the Stellenbosch area already had established a cooperative on the same land years ago, the group disintegrated due to the exposure of the land to vandalism and robberies. The new group started its formation in August 2011 on the same five hectares of municipal commonage land with over five members, of which only five were left a few months after they had started. At the time of this study, none of the members of this cooperative lived on a farm as opposed to the members of the other two cooperatives. The lack of security on the land is still one of the challenges that has to be solved for this cooperative. This cooperative has not officially signed a contract with WFP yet and has no funds available at the moment, but received a grant from the University of Stellenbosch for the construction of a nursery. The Rawsonville cooperative started its group formation in 2006 with a total of 32 members, which were reduced to currently seven members over the years due to a struggle to access land over a period of four years. In 2010, they finally got access to a piece of land (approx. 1/2 ha) owned by the municipality for a period of three

years as a temporary solution. Additionally, in late 2010 this cooperative finally had access to a mushroom container for mushroom production. The members running this cooperative used to be seasonal farm workers at different farms. They have been assisted by WFP for six years and are at the exit phase of the program. The Rawsonville cooperative is funded by the National Development Agency (NDA). The Ceres cooperative was formed in 2008 out of the initiative of four of its members and officially signed an agreement with WFP in 2009. Currently, there are eight women (five of them are active) forming this cooperative, all of them living on the same farm with the exception of one member who lives on a neighbor farm. In 2010 The members of this cooperative negotiated the lease of one hectare of land and a house for vegetable and mushroom production from a church after having looked for land for over a year. In early 2011, the church took back the house for mushroom production and at the end of the year the land for vegetable production was taken back as well. This cooperative was funded by the Finish Embassy, however, at the time of this study, this cooperative was not being funded anymore. Source: Google Maps, self-edited

Research Approach

A phenomenological qualitative research approach was chosen and used for this study. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998: 16), one of the most important reasons to choose to do qualitative research is " the desire to step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspective and in doing so make discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge". Therefore, a qualitative approach seeks in-depth understanding of underlying processes, values,

dilemmas, emotions, conflicts and relationships of particular groups that lead to specific outcomes (Drury et al. 2010). Furthermore, qualitative approaches are based on the believe that there are multiple realities and not only one " truth" (Prokopy 2011). According to Creswell (2009: 175, 176), in qualitative research the researchers are the key instrument for collecting multiple sources of data, such as observations, interviews, documents, etc., by having direct interactions with the participants in their natural site. The researcher interprets what he or she sees and hears and also identifies different aspects involved in order to have a larger picture of a situation. Moreover, he or she focuses on the participant's meanings about problems and uses theoretical lens, such as culture factors or racial differences, etc. All this was necessary to understand different perspectives, processes of decision making and to discover root motivations of the participants of this study. The different sources for data collection are explained below.

Methods of Data Collection

To the methods of data collection applied in this study belong data collected from interviews, participant observation, attending staff meetings and data collected from field notes. In addition, WFP documents such as reports, workshops and training material were accessible, which were used as well for data collection.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is one of the methods of data collection in qualitative research and it represents the starting point for such a research (Schensul et al. 1999: 91). According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002: 1), the researcher

conducting this method takes part in the daily activities, interactions and <https://assignbuster.com/the-womens-cooperative-program-health-and-social-care-essay/>

events of a group of people in order to gain understanding and to learn about aspects of their life routines and cultures. It uses the information gained through participation and observation through explicit recording (in field notes) and analysis of this information (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002: 2). Within this study, during the nearly three months of stay (from early March to late May 2012) at WFP, field notes with observations and reflections were taken on the activities and interactions between the organization and the cooperatives. At the organization I was part of many program activities, formal meetings, field visits, planning of a workshop and trainings. I was allowed to attend the training called the Brazilian Creole Seed Project for the recovering of traditional and indigenous seeds, organized by the South African and Brazilian government, and attended by the members of the WFP cooperatives. I attended the training together with the cooperative members for almost one week in a different city being able to engage more closely with the women of both cooperatives. Field visits to the Stellenbosch cooperative allowed me to participate within cooperative activities such as the building of a nursery gaining an insight on interactions between cooperative members, their perceptions and ways of communication between each other.

Interviews

Within this study qualitative interviews were conducted. Qualitative interviews differ from an ordinary conversation as there is a need of special skills to hear what people really say and this takes considerable practice. In qualitative interviews there is an interaction and engagement with the interviewee where the questions are adapted to him/her and to what he/she

knows and wants to share making each of the interviews unique (Rubin and Rubin 2005). A total of thirteen individual face-to-face interviews, twelve semi-structured and one unstructured, with the women participating in the cooperatives program and WFP staff, were conducted for this study during the field work. The questionnaires for the interviews were developed based on the previous study conducted by Eisermann (2011) and on insights about the research context gained after a period of time spent with the partner organization as well as on feedback made by them and by Dr. Lemke, Senior Researcher of the larger research project. The interviews were conducted in two different phases: interview phase I (Appendix A), which was carried out with the members of the Ceres cooperatives after six weeks of being in the field; and interview phase II (Appendix B), which was carried out with the members of the Ceres and Stellenbosch cooperatives three weeks after the first interview phase. For the first interview phase, questions were translated into Afrikaans and answers into English by the previous cooperatives program officer (currently working on a contract basis at WFP). In order to avoid bias, the questionnaires of the first phase did not include any question related to perceptions by the cooperative members about the partner organization nor related to its relationships or processes of decision making. This was asked later in the second phase of the interviews, in which three out of five interviews required translation. However, these second phase interviews were translated by an acquaintance of the participants and not a WFP staff member. The first interview phase took place on the farm on which the Ceres cooperatives members live, during my visit of one member's home over the course of one afternoon. Before this visit I had only met the Ceres cooperative once. Nonetheless, I used every opportunity for building rapport

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and establishing a social relationship with the members of the Ceres cooperative, which is essential for the success of an interview (Jennings 2005). Therefore, this second visit was also part of the time needed to build empathy and establish such a social relationship with the participants. The second interview phase was carried out within the learning training, the Brazilian Creole Seed Project, which was attended by the members of the Ceres and Stellenbosch cooperatives for a period of one week in Barrydale, a village located approximately 215 km from the WFP. This permitted a different setting for conducting the interviews, allowing me to participate as an equal member of the group, to engage closely with the participants and to find the adequate time for interviewing them as well. Unfortunately, no interview at all could be carried out with any of the members of the Rawsonville cooperative due to a dispute between them and the partner organization (for more details see Section Error: Reference source not found). In addition, a third interview questionnaire (Appendix C) was developed in order to understand the perception of the WFP manager about the cooperative program as such and then about the special features, challenges, solutions and lessons learned of the specific cooperatives.

Attending WFP Staff Meetings

Staffs meetings by WFP take place once a month and are organized by a different staff member every time in order to integrate the group and avoid monotony. The meetings are structured as follows: After each staff report on their personal state in detail, a team building exercise takes place. Minutes from previous staff meetings are reviewed. The current work, difficulties and achievements of the different WFP programs are discussed and reflected on.

Finally, tensions between staff are addressed. Being part of WFP staff meetings was very helpful for me in order to gain an insight on the development of the organization and perceptions about different situations such as conflicts with one of the cooperatives and the way of handling it, lessons learned, their role as an NGO, social relations and power dynamics between the groups.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the process of sorting and classifying the data that has been collected (Green et al. 2007) and moving from the collected data into understanding and interpreting the people and situations that were investigated (Taylor and Gibbs 2010). This is a time-consuming process due to the required constant movement between the different stages of data analyses (Green et al. 2007). According to Dey (2005: 272, 273), qualitative analysis rarely proceeds a direct line from the first stage to the conclusions, it rather undergoes a series of spirals moving back and forth through the different phases as the analysis progresses since more evidence is collected and concepts and connections become clearer. The process of data analysis followed in this study is summarized in Error: Reference source not found.

According to Error: Reference source not found, as a first step and already during the field work the interviews of the first phase were transcribed. After having transcribed all interviews and typed observations and field notes, the "raw data" was sorted, organized and prepared for the analysis. The second stage in the analysis process is the "immersion in the data", which consists of reading and re-reading the transcripts and listening to recordings of the interviews repeatedly for detailed examination, reflecting and trying to get a

clearer picture. This stage enables later interpretations (Green et al. 2007).

In a session with the supervisor and colleagues the third stage in data analysis, "categorizing and coding", was discussed and practiced using different examples from our field research. This stage consisted of dividing the whole dataset into categories and subcategories assigning codes to the different categories. This was made by highlighting the text with different colors and adding note line numbers which related to items on a separate sheet (Green et al. 2007). Categories were based on research questions and on components of the Women's Empowerment and The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework. As the analysis improved new categories were created, more codes were added and old codes were re-examined. An example of the third stage in data analysis, "categorizing and coding" is illustrated in Appendix D using an extract of the "raw data". In addition, a diagram in Appendix E shows the structure of the results in chapter Error: Reference source not found built out of the same example. In the fourth stage presented in Error: Reference source not found, "linking and connecting", interrelations, similarities and differences in the data between categories were linked, connected and summarized by creating different tables. In addition the number of times some issues came up was counted in order to roughly estimate the relative importance within the different categories (Taylor-Powell and Renner 2003). The fifth stage refers to the validation of the data, which means determining how accurately the participants' realities are represented by an account and how credible the study is (Schwandt 1997 cited by Creswell and Miller 2000). Within this study the procedure of triangulation was used in order to ensure validity. According to Creswell (2009: 229), triangulation is the most frequently used strategy to <https://assignbuster.com/the-womens-cooperative-program-health-and-social-care-essay/>

assess the accuracy of findings, which employs only the researcher's lens and consists in supporting evidences collected through different methods, such as observations, interviews and documents (Creswell and Miller 2000). Finally, the last stage in the data analysis involved the interpretation of all the categories and connections found comparing findings with information gathered from the literature and confirming precedent findings, diverging from them or proposing further inquiry (Creswell 2009: 189).

Research Limitations

Before going to South Africa it was intended by me to visit, interview and spend time with the members of the different cooperatives. Unfortunately this wasn't possible for the Rawsonville cooperative due to a dispute between WFP and the cooperative members who did not desire any contact with the partner organization. This happened very shortly before I arrived to South Africa so it could not have been anticipated by the partner organization. During the whole research period spent in South Africa I only met the members of this cooperative once. So no interview was conducted for any of the members of the Rawsonville cooperative and my study on this cooperative was limited to observations on information given in staff meetings with the organization, their reports and perceptions and on one interview with a third person involved. Therefore, findings about this cooperative might be biased. Another limitation for this study was the lack of options for public transport which reduced my visits to the Ceres cooperative, leaving me dependent on the partner organization to visit that cooperative. This was exacerbated by the lack of a coordinator of the cooperative program which limited the field visits by WFP even more. The

fact that the Ceres cooperative was not productive at the time of my research period, on the other hand, also called the benefits of staying and living with the members of this cooperative into question.

Role of Researcher

According to Przyborski and Wohlrab-Sahr (2010: 58), by entering the field the researcher takes part in a communication process in which he brings in much of his own personality with a different social background, individual characteristics, a specific genre, previous knowledge, social resources, etc. This cannot be excluded or avoided, which is why the participative observation of a researcher must include the reflection of his role in the field during the research process (Creswell 2009: 117). So for example, my personal background is different than the one under study in so far as all my basic needs were always satisfied. Whether I reached my goals merely depended on my own motivation. Thus, I was expecting a lack of motivation to be the main reason why the women under study fail to reach their goals. Having spent time in the field, however, I realized the severity of other challenges the women face (i. e. access to land, market access, weak infrastructure and tenure security, etc.) and concluded that motivation could only be playing a minor role amongst those. Nevertheless, I tried to answer what the lack and / or reduction of motivation could have been caused by. Another aspect regarding participative observation is the fact that the researcher faces, along the field work, the dilemma of being between closeness or distance to the study participants, where on the one hand building trust and being accepted by the participants is necessary to be accepted into the field in the first place, while on the other hand a certain

distance in the course of the research is necessary in order to act as a witness who is able to pick out things that others do not see anymore (Przyborski and Wohlrab-Sahr 2010: 59, 60). The difficulty resides in finding the "right" balance without forgetting the role of the researcher. Gaining trust in the field at the beginning of the research period was not so much of a challenge for me; however, finding the "right" balance was a challenge especially in the course and at the end of the research period where distance was more strongly needed in order to examine situations in a different way than the study participants do (Przyborski and Wohlrab-Sahr 2010: 60). I realized this possible imbalance towards the end of my field research while conducting an interview with the former WFP cooperatives program coordinator, who had then joined a Rawsonville farmers' association as Community Development Manager, who gave me a different perspective on the work of WFP in the region. For instance, she suggested WFP might want to consider involving farm owners in the discussions about e. g. problems of female farm workers in order to find specific solutions. She argued that, with farm workers being completely dependent on their employers, encouraging them to fight and protest against the farm owners may often damage the employer-employee relationship even more and leave workers in an even more vulnerable position. While it is clear that her function at the time required her to defend the interests of farm owners, I feel that finding out more about the views and positions of farm owners may result in new ideas and opportunities to cooperate in order to improve the workers' situation. The need and possible benefits of a cooperation with farm owners is also illustrated by Atkinson (2007: 107), who concludes that farm owners and farm workers need to be involved directly in the process of determining their

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needs and finding solutions such as the transport of farm workers and their families, maintaining proper housing and infrastructure, etc. This, however, only became clear to me when I gained an outsider's perspective on WFP.