



FFLG GUIDE



ORGANIC
FFLG
ACADEMY

CONTENT



GUIDE FOR THE FARMER FAMILY LEARNING GROUP APPROACH

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SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

INTRODUCING THE FFLG APPROACH

Farmer Family Learning Group approach is a participatory learning by doing process where smallholder organic farmers come together and with the guidance of a “facilitator” find feasible solutions to improve their farming based on what is naturally and locally available on their farms. Where solutions are to be sought out side of the individual farm, the approach emphasizes not to think of “shopped” solutions but rather focus on solutions given by nature and human nurtured inter-farm interactions. Thus, the farmer family develops their farm not in isolation but as part of the system of different farms which are continuously interacting.

The farmers that come together develop a schedule to guide their joint action for working together through rotational visits (about four visits per month to different host farms). The FFLG group knows in advance what to expect next based on a thorough advance plan. The FFLG approach thus builds the capacity of farmers to manage their soils, crops, animals, markets, seeds, farmer institutions and develop their community.

The approach has elements similar to the traditional methods of solving laborious activities as indicated by existence of local names e.g “ekirimya”-lhukonzo, “kulimirangana”-Rutooro, and “kilimo pamoja”-swahili” where farmers work on each other’s farms to pool labor. However, the traditional form referred to previously in the local dialects (ekirimya, kulimirangana and kilimo pamoja) is short of the joint learning, planning, marketing and community interventions that are key in the FFLG approach. The approach therefore advances the traditional system into an organised intervention whose outcome is geared towards the sustainable benefit of individual family farms and the entire farmer family learning community as a whole.

The approach brings together the family as a “farming unit” thus when the family hosts the FFLG members, each member of the host family participates in the “hosting” such that the work left on the host farm as agreed with the FFLG will be the responsibility of the entire farm and the spirit of family ownership of the farm is hence forth emphasised/nurtured.

For successful and functional FFLG initiative, three main actors at different levels are engaged. These are presented under different sections of this guide to provide insight into successful operationalization of the FFLG approach:

- 1. Farmer Institutions “description, key features and roles”**
- 2. The Facilitators course “building capacity of the facilitators”**
- 3. Farmer Family Learning Group in practice “the practical engagement between the facilitator and the Farmer families”**

Farmer Family Learning Group (FFLG) is a participatory approach where farmers learn and work together on their small-scale organic farms with guidance of a facilitator (advisor) to improve the resilience at:

- **Farming system level;** through implementation of on-farm resilience building such as implementing family farming, animal and crop diversification, soil and water conservation, integrated farm planning, transitioning into organic farming. In Family farming, every member of the family participates/contributes in the farm activities and learn to take up new roles according to their capacity with respect to gender considerations. The “family ownership of the farm” is aimed to ensure inter-generational continuity of the farm.
- **Group level;** through joint activities such as organic product value addition, marketing and advocacy.
- **Land scape level;** most FFLG members are within the same geographical area. The combined interventions e.g soil erosion control by an FFLG results into less water pollution, planting trees results into a greener environment and micro climate at land scape level. Thus benefits associated with FFLG interventions create resilience beyond boundaries. The main target of FFLG is the small-scale farmers since they have limited resources to sustain their organic farms, are vulnerable to climate change and other human and natural variabilities and are most often left out by majority interventions which instead focus on commercialised large-scale farming yet small-scale farmers form the majority of food producers.

The Farmer Family Learning Group approach as a system of mentoring and coaching organic farmers has numerous benefits among which the following deserve mention;

- **Social capital building:** Through working together, FFLGs support beyond group members and improve the entire community for example they open new roads for transporting their produce to the market, support the elderly in the community to grow nutritive crops, support the education of the young people in the community, purchase good quality animals to improve their livestock in the community etc.
- **Livelihood:** Diversification of products ensures balanced diets and better nutrition hence better health, better incomes realized from joint marketing of quality products, quick access to reliable and affordable loans from the savings and credit under FFLG. Generally, better living conditions, happier families.
- **Production:** As a result of implementing resilient organic farming methods most FFLG family farmers report 20-60% increase in yield but also the diversification results into numerous products from the same land.
- **Empowerment:** Dignified livelihoods through the holistic sustainability attained through realization of the Social, Economic and Ecological sustainability creating a focus beyond egocentric economic aggrandizement. The realization of both social, economic and ecological richness results into a people ready to exercise their sovereignty.
- **Gender equality:** Leadership at FFLG level and the roles at the farmer family level are gender sensitive ensuring participation and benefiting all including decision making despite the gender.

BACKGROUND FOR THE FFLG GUIDE

Successful Organic farming is based on deep understanding of the functioning of the farming system including the unseen interactions which take place in the soil and between the big crops and animals on the farm; and the interactions among the people and between people, their farms and the society. Given this complexity, farmer “advisors” ought to be very knowledgeable not only in the subject of living soils but also in the functioning of markets, processing of plants and animal products etc. However, no one can be an encyclopedia of all streams of knowledge. Therefore, to successfully advise farmers on the complex subject of organic farming, the “facilitator” needs a good understanding of different streams of knowledge (both natural and social sciences) but also key is the ability to learn and synthesize experiences of the practicing organic farmers.

This guide is for those that are involved with Organic small scale farming to promote organic resilient farming methods, offer practical advice for sustainability of small scale family farms, meaningful marketing of organic products from small scale family farms, advocating for supportive conditions to implement organic farming and; strengthening farmer institutions enabling a dignified livelihood for farmer families. The guide contains details on farmer institutions for implementing the FFLG approach. It also guides on the course on FFLG approach for those that guide the facilitators’ course and then guidance to the Facilitators of organic Farmer Family learning Groups (FFLG) during the practical participatory process of developing organic family farms in the FFLG.

The guide is based on experience built over 10 years development of the FFLG approach implemented in several organisations which have united to develop “Kilimo Organic Farmer Learning Centre (KOFLEC)” to further the knowledge on FFLG approach, organic farming resilient methods, advocacy for organic and strong organic farmer institutions. A pool of knowledge exists on the resilient organic methods, marketing, advocacy and; savings and credit that a facilitator should be well versed with. However, from the perspective of the pioneers of the FFLG approach, there are no comprehensive materials on the three key themes combined as vital for the successful implementation of the FFLG approach.

Since the FFLG approach is now used across countries, it is vital that a harmonized guide for those who use/have interest in the FFLG approach is developed to ensure harmony in the processes of the FFLG development without compromising the flexibility of this approach. Flexibility to adjust to local conditions while maintaining the basic principles is paramount for the success of FFLG in different situations. In this guide, we do not regurgitate the organic practices to the detail but rather focus on the approach that we have developed as vehicle to aid in the practical implementation of organic farming both at household level and at the landscape level.

This guide walks you through the process of “forming, implementing and strengthening” successful organic FFLGs. In our previous guide “Host team manual-A guide for host teams and for those who guide host teams at Farmer Family Learning Group (FFLG) facilitator courses” (Vaarst and Nalunga, 2015, Vaarst et al., 2011), we dwelt more on how to conduct the “course” for facilitators.

Where do we get this complex stream of knowledge? Our ten years plus experience prove that the facilitator is central in the process of FFLG initiation, formation and sustenance. But also, that the most a facilitator should do is “being able to bring people, their diverse views, knowledge and experience together/in harmony” such that they can agree on their own course of action which they equally own and is flexible to their real life situations.

Since 2009, several farmer facilitators have successfully followed this process and from different/flexible engagements with the farmers, they have been able to form vibrant Farmer Family Learning Groups that produce diverse organic products including crops, animals, mushrooms, apiary, herbs etc. They also inspired “happier, confident and self-reliant” communities who are able to find solutions among and within themselves not only about organic farming but in general about living responsibly; in other words, communities who think not only about the situation but rather “Think through the situation and act”. However, without a good facilitator, the FFLG process ends in vain. Therefore, the formation of good facilitators is equally important to mentor and coach good facilitators and consequently functional FFLGs. In this guide, we attempt to address the key levels central in the FFLG process i.e the farmer institution, the facilitator and the FFLG engagement. However, in general the FFLG approach is flexible therefore to successfully implement requires flexibility, innovation and positive attitude with passion for sustainability.

This guide focuses on both the Farmer institution (selection and organising of facilitators' course), the facilitators' course and practical implementation of successful Organic FFLGs. The guide cannot provide answers to every question/situation that the facilitators encounter in the field. We count on the creativity of every facilitator to use this guide as a basis for their decisions/actions during engagement with the FFLGs even in situations which this guide does not directly address. Besides, several other resource materials that supplement this guide can be found at **organicfflg.org**. The FFLG approach is a living subject, therefore, editions of this guide will be considered with respect to evolution in the FFLG approach, the flexible approach that is owned by everyone who uses it.

FFLG guide objectives

- To popularize and enable adoption of the FFLG approach by civil society, government and private actors as a participatory farmer advisory approach
- To harmonize the FFLG approach both in content and practice among adopters of this approach under varying situations and localities
- To provide insights into establishment and operationalization of vibrant organic FFLGs

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

In 2009, a sustainable agriculture organization whose membership spread to thousands of households and to the entire Rwenzori region was experiencing the pressure to provide farmer advisory services amidst very limited human and financial resources. Worse still, the organization was un-sure of financial support in the near future yet was committed to continue offering farmer advisory services. The situation was such that the farmers were not able to pay for the advisory services even when most of the farmers found that the advisory services received were very vital for the “development” of their farms and families. Provision of farmer advisory services is perceived as a free service that the government should offer to the farmers. However, in most situations this does not happen and female farmers are more often underserved (Agholor, 2019, Mbo’o-Tchouawou and Colverson, 2014).

Government advisory staff are either overwhelmed by the farmers demands or are trained only in the convention farming systems hence have limited knowledge of dealing with organic farming or have no resources to reach out to the farmers. In attempt to address these complex challenges, in 2009 a team of 20 community process facilitators (CPFs) was identified from community focused farmer organisations. The CPFs were for two weeks oriented with inspiration based on the participatory farmer advisory approach, the “Farmer Field School-FFS” approach. The two weeks course for the CPFs marked the beginning of “Facilitators” engaging farmer families in groups as opposed to a training focused on advisory of individual farmers. At the course, the facilitators expected “experts” to tell them what to do on their organic farms but to their surprise, the course moderators indicated that “everyone” was a facilitator of the course. This, to some extent irritated the facilitators. After the two weeks course, the facilitators returned to their communities to start the “Field schools”. However, the agreement was that each facilitator would ensure that each family farm become a “school” as opposed to the centralized FFS approach where research and learning on a particular enterprise/constraint are combined and terminate when the cycle on the enterprise of concern is complete (from egg to egg; seed to seed).

The facilitators therefore worked on the family farms instead of a “model/central” farm. Two cases where the “facilitators continued engaging as Trainers” and followed the model/central farm approach, these were the only groups that collapsed within two months. After the facilitators had practised for two months, a follow-up course for sharing their field experiences and filling the gaps was organized. In their sharing, something had evolved, the successful groups had been working in rotation from one farm to another, the facilitators had listened to the farmers themselves defining their own future and thus taking the forefront in implementing the steps towards that future. It was realized that something new had evolved: “Farmer Family Learning Group (FFLG)”.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Farmer Family Learning Group: Five to thirty farmer families with the guidance of a facilitator jointly set goals to improve their agricultural, social, economic and environmental functioning using organic farming methods. The farmer families work together in rotation among the farms of the members to implement organic methods, marketing of their organic products and joining their voice seeking for policies enabling organic agriculture. In simple terms, we can break FFLG into:

- Farmers (depends on the production of vegetables, crops and animals for a living)
- Families (in a household including both wife, husband, children and grandparents, because farming is a family business)
- Learning (mutual exchange of knowledge, skills and experience to implement new ways of improving life in all livelihood aspects)
- Groups (a number of persons that agree to work together for a joint purpose)

Participatory approach: full engagement based on equal involvement of everyone in the discussion and decision-making process. Particularly referring to the ownership of decisions and involvement in implementing those decisions without being paid for the engagement but motivated particularly by the anticipated benefits from the conducted activities.

Rotational visit: FFLG members develop a schedule to guide on ensuring that each farmer family in the group become host. Therefore, the farmer families are visiting each other to learn and work on each others' farm. This may also happen among FFLGs where e.g FFLG "A" goes to learn and work from FFLG "B" and then later FFLG "B" will go to learn and work from FFLG "A". This makes it rotational since it is an exchange from one family farm to another and vice versa. In an FFLG, the rotational visits are mostly done on a weekly basis. During the rotational visit, all farmer family members are represented by one family member such that maximum 30 are present at a rotational visit. FFLGs can split into smaller working groups such that about ten are visiting the host family on a particular rotational visit.

Host farmer family: Particularly refers to the farmer family where the FFLG meets and works on a particular day. During hosting, the entire host family farm is expected to be present and participate in the activities of the day.

Community Process Facilitator (CPF)/Community Based Facilitator (CBF): These are experts in participatory farmer advisory systems with deep understanding and experience of smallholder organic farming systems, farmer group dynamics and management. We call them Community Process Facilitators (CPF)/ and sometimes Community Based Facilitators (CBF) since they are from within the community where they serve and their purpose is to guide the community in their “development” process. The facilitator is responsible to organise key activities in the FFLG e.g rotational visits. The facilitator can work with two FFLGs depending on availability and schedule of the FFLG. The CPF/CBF are of two categories:

- External Facilitator (EF) is a non-member of the FFLG and in most cases works with a farmer organization or institution. Therefore, the external facilitator is normally linked to more than one FFLG. Depending on the physical distance from one FFLG to another, the available resources such as means of travel and the employment terms, a well experienced facilitator can at a time serve in 1-3 FFLGs. It would not be very productive to allocate one EF more than 3 FFLGs at a time. The EFs are normally technically qualified farmer “advisors” with some kind of certificate in agriculture. They can be employed by different farmer organizations and may therefore not be permanent in one organization. The EF will guide the FFLG to a certain level until the FFLG is mature to continue without the EF but rely on the internal built capacity among the members. In the maturing process of the FFLG, a member of the FFLG is mentored by the EF to take over the role of the EF. That member that takes over is the other category of CPF/CBF called;
- Internal facilitator (IF) is selected from among the FFLG members to ensure that the FFLG continues beyond the availability of the external facilitator. The IF is identified by the FFLG members and the EF at the beginning/formation of the FFLG as someone with qualities to take on the sustenance of the FFLG. One IF serves in one FFLG but can on special call for a given period go to serve in another FFLG to address a specific need. It is normally someone that easily learn, is of voluntary spirit, an active farmer with leadership skills. The IF mostly learns about facilitating in an FFLG from the EF and from interaction with other IF and exchange learning visits to other FFLGs. Only in special cases may the IF participate in organized specialized courses such as: resilient organic farming methods, joint marketing and advocacy. Such courses are normally demand driven by IFs.

PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC FARMING

The resilient organic farming methods used in the FFLGs are centered on the four organic principles. The FFLG approach embraces all the principles of organic farming and beyond. It has an inbuilt social movement aspect born out of the interconnectivity among members of a particular FFLG and between FFLGs. Cohesion between the organic principles and the FFLG nexus is briefly outlined in the following:

Health: The FFLG approach promotes use of organic farming methods that build healthy soils, healthy plants and healthy animals. The production methods used including at value addition and processing aim to improve the health of the environment and the people.

Ecology: FFLGs are based on systems thinking which optimizes interactions among the elements in the farming system. In the FFLGs, the integration of agroecosystems thinking as per the IFOAM Ecological principle is emphasized. FFLGs focus on enhancing interactions that foster the functioning of agroecosystems. Through agroecosystem analysis of each of the family farms, the elements that support each other on the farm are brought closer and those that are antagonistic but in one way or another benefit the system are separated in space to reduce counteracting each other on the farm. The FFLG also consider ecological interactions within and between the FFLGs. Such, results into ecologically sound actions at both family farm level and broadly at landscape level.

Fairness: FFLGs build a spirit of “togetherness” in communities and beyond. This promotes the concern for one another and for other elements of the agroecosystem. FFLG members buy from one another at good prices, sell to each other good quality and treat those who work on their farms with dignity, with good pay and building a community that spread opportunities and foster equity.

Care: The FFLG members support one another to accord maximum care to their crops and animals. They help each other to build structures for animals that enable them to live in their natural state and feed well. Same care is given to consumers of FFLG products by ensuring that the product is safe for consumption. They care for the environment through advocating to save sensitive/fragile ecosystems such as wetlands and influencing for policies that favour sustainable production methods.



SECTION 2: OPERATIONALIZING THE FFLG APPROACH

ROLES OF FARMER INSTITUTIONS

FFLG does not happen by default. For the process to be successful, there is normally a strong structure/farmer institution bringing together more than one FFLG and more than one facilitator. In most cases, a farmer institution initiates the need to use FFLG approach due to the realised benefits of FFLG approach. These may include cost effectiveness of the approach as an advisory system, sustainability of the approach, great impact on community with limited human resource. The initiator can be a community-based organisation, farmer association, non-governmental organisation, civil society or government such as District production department that is desirous of reaching out-to many farmers with limited financial and human resource. The farmer institution is key in facilitating the formation of FFLGs and in supporting and mentoring the FFLGs and their facilitators. The institution should have a dynamic team to handle the human resource, financial management and technical operations of the FFLG intervention. From experience, it has been realized that the FFLGs in practice may constitute/form the Annual General Assembly (AGA) of the farmer institution involved in FFLG processes.

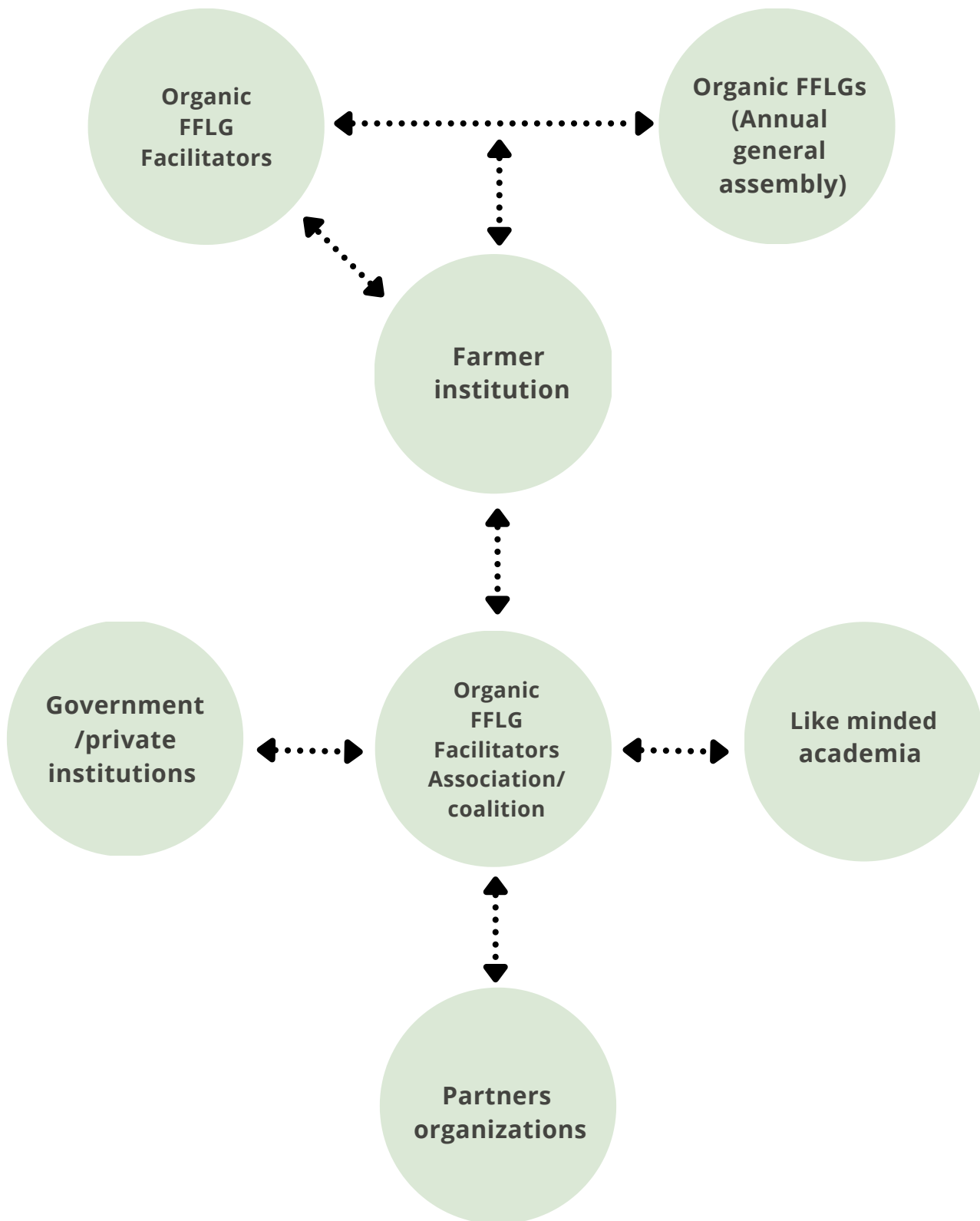
The FFLGs therefore become a very important part of the high-level structure of the institution. Thus, the operations of the farmer institution have a strong bearing on the nature of FFLGs that are linked to it. The institution should therefore be a living example of the key values of FFLG i.e trustworthy, innovative, participatory, transparent etc. The farmer institution should ensure that a spirit of voluntarism is cultivated among the facilitators from the start such that economic gain is not the major motivation for both the EFs and IFs.

Roles of farmer institutions in FFLG approach

- Selecting appropriate EFs for the facilitators' course
- Building the capacity of the facilitators in the FFLG approach, organic farming, joint marketing and advocacy.
- Providing facilitators information on state-of-the-art innovations in organic farming
- Bridging the FFLG with government programs and other opportunities that enhance FFLG activities
- Mentoring and coaching facilitators
- Organizing exposure and exchange learning among facilitators from different FFLGs
- Overall coordination of facilitators of FFLGs and the joint activities that may be conducted among FFLGs
- Provide on-going learning for facilitators through conducting fresh courses and linking facilitators to specialized courses
- Conduct joint activities that bring FFLGs together e.g reflection meetings, advocacy events, organic agriculture technology exhibitions etc.

Institutional interactions necessary for operationalising successful FFLGs

For an institution to effectively operate successful FFLGs, it should be well connected to fulfil the technical, social and financial resources required. The key stakeholders to be included are shown in the diagram below:



PLANNING THE FFLG COURSE

The facilitators' course is preferably the first step in the formation of the FFLGs. It starts with a farmer institution selecting the appropriate EFs to pursue the course. The selected facilitators have a strong bearing on what kind of FFLGs will result from the intervention. Therefore, both knowledge and character of the facilitators matter a lot in the success of the FFLG intervention and should thus be considered by the farmer institution when selecting facilitators.

The facilitators course may take between 10-15 days depending on expectations and number of facilitators attending the course. The one(s) facilitating at the EF course should read widely all content available about FFLG such as that available on the organic FFLG academy website (organicfflg.org). Following the various participatory methods, it will be prudent that the facilitator allow the participants to share their own experience/views on every topic being discussed. This implies that every course conducted is basically an avenue to develop new knowledge/notes on the different topics.

At any one particular facilitators course, never exceed 30 participants otherwise the course ceases to be participatory. Also, gender balance is important among the facilitators. For equal representation, at least 50 % of facilitators should be female and 20 % should be youth. If the number of facilitators participating at a particular cohort intake exceed 30, the number will be overwhelming and will reduce individual participation in the course but also implies much time required for example when facilitators work in groups and have to present their work in plenary. From experience, it is recommended that a particular course should not be less than 10 EF otherwise, resources are wasted on conducting such a course with few participants. In the situation where a small organization needs to start with less than five facilitators, it is better to combine several of such organizations into one course.

FFLG course objectives

- Introduce farmer advisors to the participatory organic FFLG approach and transform them into organic FFLG facilitators
- Increase the knowledge and skills of FFLG facilitators in organic farming methods
- Build the capacity of facilitators in organizing FFLGs into meaningful joint marketing initiatives
- Build the facilitators capacity in farmer led advocacy
- Share experience on engagement of organic small-scale farmers so as to learn better ways of supporting the organic FFLGs
- Instill a spirit of exchange learning among the FFLG facilitators

SELECTING EXTERNAL FACILITATORS

External facilitators will most likely already be involved in one way or the other in the activities of the farmer institution that will be selecting them for the role of "facilitator". The selection should be based on a criterion in line with the roles that they are expected to deliver as facilitators. It is important to note that a facilitator uses dynamic knowledge and skills in operationalizing the FFLG. Therefore, from experience, we recommend that the following are considered when selecting EF to participate in the facilitators course;

- **Gender:** ensure that both male and female participants are selected to attain knowledge and skills on the FFLG facilitators course. This will enable facilitators not only to fulfil the 50% gender representation but to also learn and support each other in case a particular FFLG needs the support from female/male facilitator under different situations.
- **Literacy:** important in record keeping for the group but also necessary for the facilitator to ably participate in the course and also be able to understand and explain important communication to the FFLG. Similarly, user friendly reading materials will be more valued when the user is of some literacy.
- **Role in the community:** The facilitator should be one who already volunteers to participate in the development process of the community. They should be an example seeking sustainable solutions without being self-centred or for monetary benefit.
- **Current occupation:** The facilitator should be a practicing/exemplary farmer deriving most livelihood from farming.
- **Confidence in organic farming/will to convert to organic farming:** This relates with experience in practising organic farming on the farm(s) of the CPF. Organic FFLG facilitators should believe in the practicability of organic farming based on practical experience and therefore a CPF should be one that can give practical testimony of how organic farming works with no doubt in the practice. In the situation where non has practical organic farming experience, the one to be selected for the role of CPF should be desirous of converting to organic farming.
- **Community experience:** Should have lived in the village among the members of the FFLG and can identify with them.
- **Attitude:** The facilitator should be open-minded and eager to learn deeper on areas of organic, value addition, advocacy and governance.
- **Leadership:** The best facilitators are the ones that are involved in some role of leadership in their community. This sharpens their knowledge and skills of governance and are therefore capable of having the confidence of the FFLG membership.

After completion of the course the FFLG facilitator should;

- understand the basic principles of the FFLG approach and be able to implement them.
- appreciate and acknowledge the rotational visits principle of the FFLGs
- understand the basic principles of Organic Agriculture (have been introduced to organic farming methods in general and to two specific organic farming techniques)
- be able to perform their role as external facilitator in the FFLGs
- have a basic understanding of joint marketing
- be familiar with advocacy at community level

PREPARING FOR THE FACILITATORS' COURSE

Venue: The venue for the training should offer a proper atmosphere for learning (conducive space, projection facility, possibility for break rooms, farm setting to allow practical farm interactions)

Information: Ensure to inform participants early in time so as to prepare on their side e.g to think of the group to engage after the course, preparing their family for the time they will be away.

Materials: Sufficient materials e.g flip charts, marker pens, masking tape. Avoid giving too much reading materials at the beginning or during the course since this may destruct the participation and personal learning during the course

Make your team: Enough course organisers with good team worker for keeping the course on track. At least three course organisers with diverse knowledge and skills are required to conduct a successful course

Keep concentration among participants: Take care not to lose the concentration of the participants since majority will be with family responsibility. Day by day, the participatory methods capture the attention of the participants but overall during the 10 plus days, the course organizers should assess if the participants need a break during the course or if they can run the entire course consecutively.

Key knowledge areas for facilitators

The typical FFLG engages in more than organic farming practices. Other activities typical for FFLGs include savings and credit, peace building particularly in family farms, farmer institutional development, advocacy, health, leadership etc.

Therefore, the facilitator should be knowledgeable in these topics besides basic knowledge and experience in organic agriculture. This can be attained through exchange learning visits, reading, experience sharing with farmers/fellow facilitators and attending courses for facilitators.

Some of the topics are beyond the scope of this guide and will be covered under different modules. More can also be found in the several materials developed on the FFLG approach such as; Tibasiima et al., 2012, Vaarst and Nalunga, 2015, Vaarst et al., 2012, Vaarst et al., 2016, Vaarst et al., 2019, Vaarst et al., 2011 (References).



DETAILED PROGRAM FOR THE FFLG COURSE

This section covers topics, time proposed for each topic and suggested participatory methods to use for the different topics to be covered at the facilitators course based on the previously conducted courses for the facilitators. For details on the different participatory methods indicated in this section, please refer to Vaarst et al. (2011).

Host teams are free to select alternative participatory methods most suitable for the session and familiar to them. The course content will be seriously influenced by the expectations from the participants at each course. Therefore, when organizing a facilitators' course be aware to chronologically integrate the expectations of the participants into the course content and adjust the proposed day by day agenda accordingly.

It is all about the flexibility of the FFLG approach!

COURSE DAY 1

Introduction and ground setting. The first day of the course is typically for ground setting: building rapport, agreeing on clear agenda/program for the course, leadership of the course, integration of expectations into the course agenda etc. The first day is facilitated by the organisers of the course to inspire the host teams on what their role will be during their days of acting as "host teams".

On day one, the facilitators start by introducing themselves to each other. Start already by using participatory methods such as buzz groups. By this the facilitators start to develop passion for participatory engagement. For example, during paired introductions, the paired participants will already discuss what to say and what not to say to the group about themselves thus practice the participatory decision making. This session is very key since it creates first impression and rapport among facilitators. After introductions, use preferably group salad (Vaarst et al., 2011). This is a game where each participant is allocated a fruit name; Different fruits mix to make a salad which is a group with members bearing different fruit names to mix the participants and form host groups with participants from different farmer institutions. Form at least six host teams each of at least four facilitators. The formed groups become the host teams on the different days of the course. The host teams will take up from the second day.

The first day is for the course organizers to prepare the host teams and the agenda of the entire course. This includes integrating the participant expectations in the agenda. The expectations of the different participants should be captured using participatory methods.

To capture focused and meaningful participant expectations, these should be sieved by working in buzz groups guided by:

- What FFLG questions and issues do you expect to understand better after this course?
- In groups of three, each present the 3 main questions and issues to learn more about
- In the group, agree on three questions and issues
- Plenum presentation/reflection

After the expectations are presented, they are integrated into the course curriculum. This makes the facilitators to "own" the course agenda. The host teams are allocated the days on which they will take lead. It will be fun to call the days by the fruit days instead of day one, day two call it e.g Orange, avocado, water melon etc.

The first day ends with an evening meeting preparation of the first host team (the roles of different members of the team, the agenda, the different participatory methods to use for each item on the agenda).

COURSE DAY 1 (CONT.)

On the first day, roles of the host teams are presented to the facilitators. These include:

- Preparation of the program of the day
- Time management
- Guide on the topics being covered
- Attending to group work/discussion/presentations
- Take note on summary of the day in terms of key learnings

The typical agenda for day one of the course includes:

TOPIC	TIME	RECOMMENDED METHODS
General welcome remarks and orientation to the venue	08:00-8:20	Group presentation (done jointly by organisers)
Self-introduction	08:20-9:00	Paired interviews and presentation
Learning expectations from the course by the participants	09:00-10:00	Cards on the wall
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meaning and definition of key concepts/terms• Facilitator Vs trainer• Participatory methods• Principles of organic farming• Challenges in organic farming	10:30-13:00	Lecture Brain storm Lecture/demonstration Lecture/demonstration Brain storm
Formation of host teams to take over the course from day two until second last day of the course	14:00-14:30	Fruit salad
Host team roles	14:30-15:00	Group discussion
Introduction to FFLG participatory methods	15:00-17:30	Lecture/demonstration
Preparation for day two with host team one (17:00-18:30)	18:00-20:00	Group discussion

COURSE DAY 2

FFLG group formation and dynamics. On the second day, the facilitators cover topics that mainly concern FFLG group formation and dynamics.

This include:

TOPIC	TIME	RECOMMENDED METHODS
Recap day one/lessons learned	08:00-8:30	Random ball (To keep everyone attentive and ready to talk, a ball is thrown randomly by a facilitator to any participant). This method will be used severally for re-cap and brain storm
Comparison of Facilitator with Trainer	09:00-10:00	Brain storm/Group café
Compare and contrast External and Internal facilitator	10:00-13:00	Role play (recorded video role play)/café
Benefits of FFLG	14:00-15:00	Increasing the circle
Introduction to planning for the FFLG by the facilitator (To be presented on the last day of the course)	15:00-16:00	Café I/Increasing the circle
End of day meeting evaluation of first host team and preparation of the second host team	16:00-17:30	Group discussion

COURSE DAY 3

Basic elements of the FFLG approach. To continue understanding basic elements of the FFLG approach.

The following topics are covered:

TOPIC	TIME	RECOMMENDED METHODS
Recap day two	8:00-8:30	Stand outside in circle and randomly select speakers using secret cards marked with a specific identity
Structure of FFLG groups (the composition, gender, leadership etc)	8:30-10:00	Group café with plenary
Main activities in an FFLG	10:30-12:00	Brain storm
Rotational visits in the FFLG	12:00-13:00	Increase the circle
Comparing FFLG with other advisory approaches	14:00-15:30	Role play (Recorded video role play)
Social capital building in FFLGs	15:30-17:00	Group discussion of which activities build social capital in their communities
Evaluation of host team two	17:30-18:00	Guided group discussion
Preparation of host team three	18:00-19:30	Guided group discussion

COURSE DAY 4

Resilient organic methods. After facilitators are familiar with the FFLG approach, now is opportune moment to integrate the organic resilient farming methods that are key for the sustainability of the FFLG. The facilitators explore the connection between the Organic principles and how they are best achieved using the FFLG approach. The facilitators share on the different organic resilient farming methods such as compost making and application, companion planting, intercropping, crop rotation, livestock integration, agroforestry, sack/mound gardens, biorations etc they use/see in the community. It is recommended that after the course, the facilitators are followed up in their FFLG for mentoring and coaching with emphasis on the organic farming resilient methods since not all organic production related challenges will be completely covered during the course.

TOPIC	TIME	RECOMMENDED METHODS
Recap day three	08:00-8:30	Host team to innovate method
Defining resilience	08:30-9:30	Role play/cinema show
Resilient organic farming methods known and used by the facilitators	09:30-11:00	Brain storm+Café
Practising tools e.g AESA, Integrated farm plan and agroecology transition sheet	11:00-13:30	Group discussion
Production challenges in organic farming whose solutions are not familiar to the facilitators	14:00-17:00	Group discussion/Case study
Evaluation of host team three	17:30-18:00	Guided group discussion
Preparation of host team four	18:00-19:30	Guided group discussion

COURSE DAY 5

Field visit on resilient organic farming methods. Facilitators and those conducting the course will find it more real (seeing is believing) to discuss things from a practical experience by working on a real-small-scale case. The practical learning should emphasise a system approach. Therefore, tools such as Agroecosystem analysis and developing an integrated farm plan should be used (see FFLG handbook). The IFP is developed jointly by the farmer family to guide the path ways towards sustainable development of their farm. IFP is key and a great step towards scheduling rotational visits in the FFLG since these will guide on which activities are to implement on the family farm. This step also introduces the FFLG members to open up their farms to other FFLG members to “develop” the farm jointly. During the course, the host farm selected for this activity should be maximum 30 minutes away from the location where the course is being conducted to minimise time for movement. Therefore, organisers of the course should locate the venue for the course near possibilities of practical organic farm learning. In case there is no nearby organic smallholder family farm, the organisers should find ways how the participants can be oriented to a practical case during the course. In most cases, it may not be possible to find a perfect organic farm, facilitators should ensure to capture the challenges and use them for further learning. It is encouraged to organise lunch locally.

TOPIC	TIME	RECOMMENDED METHODS
Introduction by the host farmer	08:00-8:30	Host team to innovate method
AESA	08:40-10:00	Field demonstration
Developing the Integrated farm plan	10:20-12:30	Field demonstration
Transition sheet to organic agriculture	12:30-13:30	Field demonstration
Discussion of theory from previous day now in practical perspective	14:30-16:00	Brain storm with practical demonstration
Concluding remarks to the host farmer and host farmers' message	16:00-16:30	Lecture
Evaluation of host team four	17:00-18:00	Guided group discussion
Preparation of host team five	18:00-19:30	Guided group discussion

COURSE DAY 6

Organic resilient farming methods and Postharvest handling. The focus is on the organic practises learnt/discussed at the host farm on the previous day. This should also include how to handle post-harvest as experienced at the farm visited on the previous day. It is important to note that proper post-harvest handling in organic farming remains one of the main challenges on most small-scale farms and compromises resilience and quality of the organic product.

Serious post-harvest losses are still experienced with limited options for organic. Therefore, organically produced products are threatened by storage chemicals due to fear of post-harvest losses. Good post-harvest handling is partly value addition to the product and consequently attracts a better price for the organic product. At the course, we focus on post-harvest handling as a form of primary value addition and save the advanced/high level value addition for specialized courses. At the specialized value addition courses, it is paramount to involve an expert to support on this topic and enrich the knowledge present among the facilitators. This area also needs innovation to be able to produce the best out of the raw products. Therefore, for this day, emphasis is on less advanced value addition that can be managed within local means/context.

Suggested topics at this level of the course for facilitators include:

TOPIC	TIME	RECOMMENDED METHODS
Recap day five	8:00-8:30	Host team to innovate method
Organic resilient methods (reflection and innovations on learnt methods on day 5)	8:30-10:00	Increase the circle/plenary
Key concepts of post-harvest handling on organic family farms	10:30-11:30	Brain storm/lecture
Post-harvest handling at family farm level	11:30-13:00; 14:00-15:00	Buzz groups
Post-harvest handling at FFLG level (Bulking)	15:00-17:00	Café discussion II
Evaluation of host team five	17:00-18:00	Guided group discussion
Preparation of host team six	18:00-19:00	Guided group discussion

COURSE DAY 7

Joint Marketing. On this day, facilitators address one of the main challenges and yet another core/interesting subject for the FFLG; “Joint Marketing”. FFLGs have the potential to raise meaningful volumes of good quality products but getting the best deal out of these good products is the challenge where the facilitator needs to give strong support to the FFLG. If possible, during the course, this topic should be handled in the real cooperative case study. For details, refer to FFLG handbook on organicfflg.org.

TOPIC	TIME	RECOMMENDED METHODS
Recap day six	08:00-8:30	Host team to innovate method
General introductions to marketing	08:30-9:30	Brain storm/Lecture
Importance of Bulking and Collective marketing in FFLG	09:30-10:00	Buzz groups
Types of marketing structures e.g marketing association, primary cooperative, cooperative union	10:00-11:00	Buzz groups
Effective procedures of making an FFLG involved in Collective marketing in non-certified produce	11:00-12:00	Cards on the wall/Lecture
Effective procedures of making an FFLG involved in Collective marketing certified produce	14:00-15:00	Cards on the wall/Lecture
The small holder farmer records including marketing cost and benefit analysis	15:00-16:30	Increase the circle
The marketing monitoring and evaluation tool	17:00-18:00	Café I
Evaluation of host team six	18:00-18:30	Guided group discussion
Preparation of host team seven	18:30-19:30	Guided group discussion

COURSE DAY 8

Advocacy in FFLGs. FFLGs operate in different locations and situations where different issues affect the functioning of FFLGs and individual farmer families. The government and other institutions have different programs geared towards creating an enabling environment for the prosperity of all. To access some of these programs, the powers that be need to be made aware appropriately of the issues from the people and by the people. This calls for an organized Advocacy intervention where the farmers themselves take lead in the process. FFLGs find it easier to advocate since as a group their issue is of community concern compared to when individual households present an issue to government for action. Advocacy happens at different levels. For the FFLG level, the advocacy will most times not go beyond district level unless if the issue concerns several FFLGs. This local level advocacy requires skill to navigate appropriately. The facilitator to be able to guide this process should have basic advocacy skills attained from the following topics on which serious follow up mentoring and coaching is required.

TOPIC	TIME	RECOMMENDED METHODS
Recap day seven	8:00-8:30	Host team to innovate method
What is advocacy	8:30-9:30	Cards on the wall
How to identify an advocacy issue in the FFLG (connecting advocacy with the every day life)	9:30-13:00	Lecture/Group discussion
Practical case study presentation from a successful advocacy initiative from a functional FFLG facilitator	14:00-16:00	Guest speaker/Discussion
Presentation of advocacy issues by facilitators and How FFLGs should pursue the identified advocacy issues	16:00-17:30	Group discussion with Guest speaker
Evaluation of host team eight	17:30-18:00	Guided group discussion
Preparation of host team nine	18:30-20:00	Guided group discussion

COURSE DAY 9

Reflection on resilient organic farming methods and developing action plans for FFLG formation. This day is for wrapping up and concretising the facilitators action plans/way forward for engaging the FFLGs (to be presented on the final day). Focus should be on the organic resilient farming methods which may still remain a concern for the soon to be commissioned facilitators. At this stage facilitators should be able to draw clear connections between the FFLG as an approach to guide small scale farmers and as an approach to enhance/enable transition into organic farming. It is therefore important that the facilitators clearly integrate in their plans for the FFLG clearly the organic resilient farming methods that will be emphasised in the FFLG. The agenda of this day is open also to accommodate expectations from the participants which are not addressed in the previous days.

The agenda for the day may include:

TOPIC	TIME	RECOMMENDED METHODS
Recap day eight	8:00-8:30	Stand up brain reflection session (All stand and whoever presents sits down)
Organic resilient farming methods (reflection and innovations for way forward)	8:30-13:00	Café II
Reflection session on the facilitators' action plans/presentations	14:00-16:00	Buzz groups
Facilitator personal finalisation of the action plan/preparations by the panels	16:00-18:00	Individual work
Preparation for presentation of the action plans (organising rooms, allocating facilitators where to present etc)	18:00-18:30	Practical demonstration
Evaluation of host team nine	18:30-20:00	Guided group discussion

COURSE DAY 10

Presentation of action plans (exam). Depending on the agenda which may extend 10-15 days, and depending on availability of time and other resources, the course can be broken into shifts of say five days each, given the varying topics and time taken to exhaustively cover the content, in most cases the tenth day of the course is the final day to run the course and is when the facilitators present their "exam" in form of a work/action plan for initiation/transformation of FFLG groups.

The course organisers should ensure that each facilitator has a conducive provision/environment to present their exam. This can be attained through forming different panels for presentation (maximum five facilitators are presenting per panel).

The criteria for assessing the work plans should focus on:

- Clear introduction/description of the target "group"
- Relevancy of the methods to be used in regard with the target group described and the specific topic
- Strategies for including relevant leaders in the FFLG
- Description of the different activities step by step for initiating and sustaining the FFLG
- Clarity and connectivity of the entire plan

Panels should thoroughly harmonize during day nine on how to handle the presentations

Certificate for FFLG course

The successful facilitators, those who present logical action plans, are awarded a "Certificate of Completion" by an institution recognised to conduct the course for organic FFLG facilitators and is thus commissioned to be part of the organic FFLG facilitators.

The certificate awarding institution will be in most cases Kilimo Organic Farmer Learning Centre (KOFLEC) which is responsible for organizing the facilitators' course.

The certificate shall later on be fully stamped after the facilitator has successfully initiated at least one organic FFLG.



SECTION 3: ENGAGEMENT WITH THE FARMER FAMILY LEARNING GROUP BY THE FACILITATOR

FORMING AN FFLG

After successfully completing the course in section two of this guide, the facilitators go back to their communities to initiate the FFLGs. It is good that the facilitator does not wait long to initiate the FFLG. One best opportunity is to announce at gathering places such as markets, churches, parties etc. The facilitator can also choose to visit the households individually and introduce the topic and also inform the farmer families that there will be a meeting for the group at a particular time and place. It is good that the facilitator has identified the farmer families to be part of the FFLGs even before they attend the facilitators' course. Some groups are either already existing, others are "mobilized" by the facilitator. If the group is already existing, the facilitator should find out whether it doesn't have elements that will deter the group from conforming to organic farming principles. If the group already exists check to ensure the group leadership satisfies the FFLG stipulations e.g gender, participatory selection etc. If the group is to be formed/started by the facilitator, the goals and leadership should from the start align to the FFLG approach. If the group already exists take time to learn and understand critically the main goal (what brought the members together?) and to what extent that can influence in the FFLG development.

Typical steps for FFLG formation

- Sensitization meetings for farmer families/Existing farmer groups are invited to develop into FFLGs
- FFLG groups elect internal FFLG facilitator
- Baseline on the newly established FFLGs (To be done by the farmer institution)
- Development of FFLG action/rotational plans
- Implement the FFLG meetings and rotational visits/Introduce organic farming methods to the FFLGs
- Facilitate the implementation of good governance, management and record keeping practice among the FFLGs
- Monitoring and evaluation, re-planning etc.

Facilitating the start up meeting for an FFLG

- Define and emphasise the goals and expectations of the group.
- Develop the guidelines/rules and regulations.
- Identify the internal facilitator among and with the farmers. Although it is good practice for the facilitator to let the group select their own internal facilitator, some guidance is required e.g on the good qualities of the internal facilitator such as Voluntarism, Self-drive, Trustworthy, Creativity of the person, Team work spirit in the group, Willingness and ability to learn etc.
- Identify the authorities with which you need to register and agree on how to practically attain the requirements and go through the formalization steps.
- Clearly agree on the meeting schedule/rotational visits (date, time and host family).



ROTATIONAL VISITS IN FFLG

After the farmer families agree to work together as an FFLG, they start to visit each other to learn and work practically on every family farm as a unique farming system. This emanates from the fact that each family farm is different from the others in several aspects for example; the available labor, the soils, the slope of the land, the animals on the farm and several other elements are never the same on different farms. Therefore, no universal/central/demonstration training can practically be implemented on different farms in exactly the same way. To respond to this diversity on the different farms, the FFLG members guided by their facilitator develop a schedule indicating when the different family farms will “host” other FFLG members on their farm. Each family farm must be visited and worked on and each farmer family must visit the other family farms and work on them. This creates a strong bond among the FFLG members because they know each other’s challenges, aspirations, possibilities and general way of life.

The first visit to the host farm is normally done by the facilitator before other members of the FFLG can visit. This gives the facilitator prior knowledge about the host farmer family/farm and therefore puts the facilitator in position to understand the dynamics of the host farm and the knowledge to guide on the questions that will arise from the host family and the hosted FFLG. During the first visit, the facilitator is walked around the farm by the host farmer. They together understand the interactions on the family farm, identify opportunities, challenges and different options that can be used to overcome the challenges and make the farm a better organic farm.

This is repeated with all the members of the FFLG on the first day the “host” family farm is visited by all the FFLG members. When the facilitator and the entire FFLG visits the host family farm, the host gives the welcome remarks and walks the “visitors” around the farm while explaining how the farm functions. The “visitors” understand the functioning of the family farm looking at how the different elements work together and the systems interact, the decision making etc. From this perspective, the visitors and the facilitator can guide on the farm administration, integration of different elements and how to make better the resilience of the family farm.

Once there is agreement between the host farmer family, the facilitator and the FFLG about the course of action to be taken to improve the situation of the host farm to a resilient organic farm, the days to implement the different actions are also agreed upon, the activities to be taken step by step are also agreed upon, which activities to do jointly as the FFLG are agreed upon and which ones will be done by the farmer family alone. This kind of initial visit is done for all the farmer families in the FFLGs until the first cycle of rotational visits is completed. The next step is to practically implement the activities as agreed, for those; to be done by the FFLG or to be accomplished by the farmer family alone without the other FFLG members.

During working together, the host farm is responsible for the welfare of the visiting members. Since the FFLG may have upto 30 members, they may agree to work on different family farms in small groups of say 5-7 visiting farmers with the entire host farmer family. They could also choose to work on different activities on the same host farm but in small groups on the same day for example construct an energy saving smoke free stove+dig a compost pit+construct a pig sty etc on the same day. In such a situation, the host family will have to seriously prepare the materials needed for the work to run smoothly in the different small groups that are working on the different activities. This approach helps the FFLG to be together and the different capacities work on the different tasks where they feel most suitable e.g elderly women can be collecting and preparing herbal plants while the young energetic persons are opening up a water catching trench. In this way, each of the FFLG members is relevant and feels appreciated in the group.

Which of the above described strategies will be chosen by the FFLG depends on the different dynamics in the group and is the role of the facilitator to ensure the appropriate method of rotational visits is designed and implemented. It is encouraged that at least each farmer family hosts the FFLG within the first two months of FFLG initiation. Thus, every family farm has the chance to host others and that makes all members feel equal, important, trust and open up to each other fully. During the rotation visits, it is encouraged that the entire membership of the host family is present and participates in the activities. The involvement of the entire farmer family membership should continue even when the farmer family is working alone without the other FFLG members. This spirit of working jointly as a farmer family builds up from the joint action exhibited during the rotational visit.

On a monthly basis, at least four rotational visits are done. This implies that the FFLG will visit/work on at least one host farmer family every week.

CORE VALUES OF AN FFLG

Many values are expected but listed here are those without which the FFLG approach wouldn't suffice:

Voluntarism: in FFLG, members typically participate/work without pay but benefit is expected later and not only in monetary form but as multiple fruits to their interventions.

Trust: members should be faithful and also have confidence in others. They are able to delegate each other even in matters concerning money. Trust building is a long process but Trust can be lost in an instant yet most FFLGs stand on trust e.g members sell jointly hence they entrust one of them with their hard-earned products. Therefore, FFLG members should avoid at all costs to involve in any compromise of trust.

Transparency: Based on open documentation and declaration of information, the "business" of the FFLG is known to everyone in the community and all those who need to.

Respect: The members relate with each other respectfully and react to each other's views with appreciation. No answer is labelled wrong but may need "re-stating/adjustment".

Ownership: The members have a joint ownership of the FFLG.

Equality: Members join with different capacity and background, but are all of equal value to the group despite their gender, origin, religion/culture etc.

FFLG COMPOSITION

Leadership in the FFLG

It is always good practice to let all members democratically elect their leaders and the facilitator is at a better side if they opt out of this. The commonly adopted leadership positions in the FFLG include;

- Chairperson
- Vice chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasury
- Gender representative

Committees mostly include;

- Farmer advisory services committee
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Quality and value addition (standards)
- Investment committee
- Marketing committee

FFLG membership

The FFLG is composed of farmer families (all family members i.e adults, children, male, female, disabled etc should all participate in the FFLG activities particularly when they are host). No one joins FFLG as an individual hence membership is always expressed in number of households.

- At least five and maximum 30 households should participate in the group.
- Membership criteria should be agreed when initiating or converting the group into FFLG. Such criteria may include possession of land where to farm within the community, social interaction with community members, a farming family willing to implement organic farming etc.
- Qualifications based on the criteria should ensure that at least some members are able to keep records and participate in the FFLG leadership (this implies that someone with capacity to read and write is very vital in the group).



SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

1. Internal Facilitator (IF) takes over

A resident facilitator in the FFLG, the internal facilitator, is vital for the continuity of the FFLG. The internal facilitator is the one that takes over the roles of the external facilitator (organising meetings, guiding learning and the working together in FFLG, managing the rotational visits, inspiration etc). Therefore, the internal facilitator should learn and be mentored by the external facilitator. Most times, the internal facilitator does not participate in the courses for facilitators but is a product of the mentoring and coaching by the external facilitator. The external facilitator should give sufficient time after every FFLG session to ensure that the internal facilitator is grasping the development process of the FFLG. It is the role of the external facilitator to determine when to withdraw and let the internal facilitator take over. The external facilitator should remain in contact with the internal facilitator until the IF is fully in control.

Indicators that the internal facilitator is ready to take over the facilitation:

- Ability to successfully implement the roles delegated to the IF
- Capacity to interpret and disseminate information to the FFLG
- Adoption of organic farming practices on own farm
- Own family planning and working together on their family farm
- Effective communication in the group
- Capacity to mobilize the group for action
- Self-confidence
- Confidence of the group in the leadership of the internal facilitator

2. Income generating activities

The FFLG membership is bound together by common ownership of projects and this also ensure continuity of the FFLG. These may include income generating projects such as nursery beds, labour pooling, bee keeping, basket weaving, wine processing, savings and credit etc. It is paramount that members confirm their commitment by subscribing through some kind of membership fees. This can be used to run projects that earn an interest. Naturally these projects enable the FFLG to meet the daily operational costs but also motivates farmer families to maintain their membership due to the benefits they derive or anticipate to derive in future from being member of the FFLG .

3.Cocreation of knowledge in the organic FFLGs

Innovation is core for the sustainability and progress of organic farming. There are several un-answered questions that hinder optimization of organic farming systems and these vary from farm to farm, community to community etc. Locally generated knowledge that embrace the existing (indigenous/traditional) knowledge and new insights forged through rigorous interactions among different schools of thought, offer best/workable solutions for smallholder farmers. Some of the knowledge need to be adapted to the diverse farming systems into which they are being adopted. Farmers experiment by default on many things. However, most times they do not follow strictly the research process as is expected in scientific inquiry process. Never the less, this does not make farmers' exploration and realization meaningless. In the FFLG, the facilitator may realize that farmers are making research by default. The farmers also may know in most cases that they need/are producing knew knowledge by default. However, if this is not taken seriously, and no documentation done in the process, loss of interesting discovery will certainly result.

In the FFLG, applied knowledge cocreation is an intended action, and not by default. Indigenous knowledge and the experience of the farmers are taken as a great resource in scientific inquiry. At most stages in the FFLG development, farmers are confident in their knowledge and believe also in the intervention of the facilitators and research teams in scientific inquiry. The facilitator should play a central role in identifying and refining applied research questions. Search deeper for existing solutions and stir the farmers into making systematic inquiry. The facilitator should also maintain/coordinate the different players who may include the farmers and a Transdisciplinary team of scientists acting together to create new knowledge “cocreation”.

The facilitator should quickly identify and recognize innovative farmers and stimulate them to the deepest of their inquiry and guide them towards meaningful discovery. The facilitator should identify and link the farmers to resources particularly the knowledge (such as research institutions/farmer organization knowledgeable in organic farming/online linkage possibilities where there is no research institution or no local knowledge on organic farming) to support the process of cocreating knowledge. There are several resources on participatory action research, a process that is helpful in stimulating innovation. Necessity is the birth of innovation; the facilitator should ensure to always include a discussion on necessity for innovation during FFLG engagements.



HEALTH AND SANITATION

FFLGs are based on physical interactions which have become lately constrained due to the Covid19 pandemic. However, facilitators have innovatively found ways to maintain engagement in the FFLGs. Before Covid19, FFLGs already integrated activities for promoting good hygiene at household level. For example, they promoted hand washing tip-taps, energy cooking saving stoves that are smoke free to reduce respiratory infections/avoid and promoting good nutrition to build immunity against opportunistic infections. After covid19, the facilitators and FFLGs decided to;

- Work in smaller groups
- Make and use sanitizer locally in the FFLGs to avoid incurring high expenses on sanitizers but also to be sure on the quality of the sanitizers.
- Ensuring each host farmer has hand cleaning facilities with soap (a disinfectant)
- Adding value to their organic products which were more needed for healthy purposes and hence stimulating the farmers to play an active role in the FFLGs.
- Enhancing a farmer-to-farmer advisory system where particularly neighbours take the role to guide each other on each other's' farm.
- Enhancing the engagement of families against domestic violence

FFLG is an approach that can be adopted and suit in different situations - including being a farmer advisory approach in the difficult times where other advisory systems may not work. Innovation and flexibility of the facilitator becomes more paramount for the continuity of FFLG engagement during times where interactions are considered a threat to life.



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