



NORWEGIAN
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Partnership in Development

**A grassroots' narrative of experiencing the impact of development aid in
Sierra Leone**



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Abstract

This research project presents a qualitative study on “Partnership in Development” (PID), an existing development project in Sierra Leone initiated by the Norwegian Metodistkirkens Misjonselskap (MM) and their international equivalent in The United Methodist Church (UMC). The thesis is positioned to explore the perspective of community members in Lavulema and Mamaka, two communities that has been receiving partners in a PID project where there has been constructed a water well, and the findings reflect their opinions and experiences. The thesis will thus be a contribution to the development field, specifically with weight on the grassroots’ perspectives and experiences of development projects. An important element of MM’s development project has been to find new and better ways to organise the development cooperation between Digni’s member organisations and its partners abroad. Partnership and participation are key objectives in the PID programme. The research is conducted through semi-structured interviews of community members in the two villages Lavulema and Mamaka, and through the interviews this thesis seeks answers to the following question:

How do the local inhabitants experience that they are affected by MM’s development work in Lavulema and Mamaka in Sierra Leone?

The research data shows that the inhabitants in Lavulema and Mamaka were overall positive to MM’s development project and the way it has been carried out. Among the positive outcomes of the PID projects, access to clean water has given the populations of Lavulema and Mamaka better health conditions and reductions in waterborne diseases and given many children an opportunity to go to school. Furthermore, the research shows that MM’s method is successful in many aspects such as A: Including the women, which is positive for the community, B: Making the receiving partners feel respected and trusted by entrusting them with decisions regarding the project(s), work and management roles, and C: Encouraging positive development attitudes through an including and democratic process.

Abbreviations

APC	All People's Party
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MM	Metodistkirkens Misjonsselskap
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NORAD	The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PID	Partnership in Development
PMC	Project Management Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals (UN)
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
UN	The United Nations
UMC	United Methodist Church
UMCSL	United Methodist Church in Sierra Leone

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Photo: Author of the thesis. The water well in Lavulema community

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Actualisation

The aid business today is operated by numerous actors. Governments, local and international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's), and multilateral channels like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and various special agencies under the UN are examples of contributors in the development aid sector. Development aid is a highly political issue, and development theory has thus been heavily debated throughout the history. What development implies, how to spend aid money efficiently, and the NGOs legitimacy in decision-making on behalf of the receivers are some of the questions raised in the development debate.

The report from the United Nations Millennium Development Goals 2015 states that “globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty has declined by more than half, falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015. Most progress has occurred since 2000” (UN, 2015). Despite this fact, Sierra Leone is still one of the world's poorest countries and in the African context, poverty is still a major issue as more than 40 per cent of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa still lives in extreme poverty (UN, 2015).

The aim of this study is to conduct qualitative research on an existing development project in Sierra Leone, initiated by Metodistkirkens Misjonsselskap (MM). The development project was launched in 2002 with the working title “Partnership in Development” (PID) and an important element of this project has been to find new and better ways to organise the development cooperation between Digni's member organisations and its partners abroad. The project is operated by MM and their international equivalents the United Methodist Church (UMC) and the research in this study is funded by MM. MM is financially supported by Digni, who annually receives 186 million NOK from Norad, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Digni, 2018). MM's development project has various goals: building health clinics, schools, bridges, and water wells. The focus of this thesis is limited to the construction of water wells in two different villages in Sierra Leone, those of Lavulema and Mamaka.

1.1.1 Motivation

When the opportunity to take part in this study opened up, it immediately caught my attention. Knowing that, regrettably, development work is not always executed with respect for, and

knowledge about, the peoples and society in which the project is done. I find it important and interesting to take on a listening role, examining the receivers' experiences of a development project in their community and, as far as I know, it is not commonplace to evaluate a development project from this perspective. I see this as a great opportunity to make an empirical contribution to existing development theory because, in my view, it is important to carry out development work in a way that gains the local community in the best and most effective way possible.

1.1.2 Focus areas and research objectives

The focus area of this thesis is to study how the locals in a community, who has participated in and carried out a development project with support from an international organization, experiences the role of being on the receiving end of development work. The main objective will be to examine how the locals experience the way the project was implemented, and how they experience eventual changes in their daily lives and in their community. I have gathered data for this study using qualitative methods, and I have travelled to two different villages in Sierra Leone where I did semi structured interviews as well as focus group interviews to gather data material. I have chosen to examine projects where the goal has been to provide access to clean water in constructing a water well, I will in this thesis compare the findings from the two villages. The data material for my thesis will consist of views and reflections of the local inhabitants, all participants in the projects but with different tasks and roles connected to the project.

1.1.3 What the reader might expect

Through the data collection, I found that the inhabitants in Lavulema and Mamaka were overall positive to MM's development project and the way it has been carried out. Participation and partnership are key components in MM's development project "Partnership in Development", and the research shows that MM's method is successful in many aspects. Granted the limited scope of the study, there might be circumstances that are not uncovered through the data collection, and I make certain reservations that a more extensive study can potentially give different answers.

1.2 Research overview/literature review

1.2.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is mainly presented through Oddvar Smukkestad's book *Utviking eller avvikling* (2008), and Amartya Sen's book *Development as Freedom* (1999). Smukkestad's book serves as the historical background of development theory, while Sen's theory serves as the main theory through which the findings from the research will be analysed and discussed.

1.2.2 Other empirical research

There is extensive research on the relationship between donor and receiver, and on the conduction of international aid, but very little on the experiences of the receivers.

The book *Participatory Development Communication: A West African Agenda*. (Rajasundaram, C. V. and Guy Bessette, 1996) discusses the methodology of participatory development and how to communicate development in a way that attends to the needs and wishes of the receiving parts. The authors wrote that "there is now increasing recognition that participatory development is the most promising approach for decreasing dependency, building self-confidence and self-reliance of the people" (1996, pp. 3-4). Furthermore, the authors state that development must be understood as a participatory process of social change within a given society and can thus not come from the outside. Development communication should take place with the purpose of stimulating potential for change within a community. Rajasundaram and Bessette supports the claim that the receivers' participation and interactivity are crucial factors in a development process (1996, pp. 4-19). I refer to this book because it explores a methodology that is very similar to the methods used in the PID programme.

As far as I know, there are no existing research on the experiences of the inhabitants of Lavulema and Mamaka and the impact of development aid on their lives, nor are there any published studies on the Partnership in Development programme.

There is, however, a comprehensive study carried out by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects from late 2005 through 2009. The findings are published in the book *Time to listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid* (2012), written by Mary B. Anderson, Dayna Brown and Isabella Jean. The study relates to my research because of the fact that it takes on

the perspective of the receivers especially, in addition to local NGO staff working with aid. As far as I'm concerned, the perspective and experiences of the receivers are rarely examined when evaluating the effects and efficiency of international aid, and the findings from the CDA project confirms this. The findings from the study also shows that what people expect from aid is economic betterment, improved political and security conditions, and a sense of solidarity, collegueship and support in terms of their relation to international assistance (Anderson et al., 2012, pp. 17-19). While this is the case, the informants in their study did also point out some negative effects. On the economic side, they found that aid increases dependency and powerlessness, especially when given over many years. Long-term aid projects run at the risk of causing dependency, or making the recipients question the underlying motives of the project, in cases where the projects are not leading to independency in the long run. Another downside is that aid can worsen conflict and increase tension among groups, because international aid organisations sometimes have insufficient knowledge about local social and political power dynamics. Lastly, they found that many of the aid recipients had experiences of being treated with disrespect and mistrust by the aid providers, not being included in decision-making processes or even being consulted by the aid agencies but, in the end, not taken seriously. The one exception was the aid organisations' focus of women, where they found that the informants told of experiences where both men and women had positive benefits from programmes aimed at women (2012, pp. 21-29).

My contribution will be an empirical study of the lived experiences of the local inhabitants in Lavulema and Mamaka, two villages in Sierra Leone, who has participated in an international development aid programme providing water wells for the population. The thesis will thus be a contribution to the development field, specifically with weight on the grassroots' perspectives and experiences of development projects.

1.3 Analytical unit and research question

1.3.1 Research objects

The research objects of this study are the local inhabitants of two different villages in Sierra Leone: Lavulema and Mamaka. My aim was to listen to the opinions and experiences of people that has participated in development activities connected to the water well projects, and people

who are affected by the development projects in one way or another. The informants are people from different generations, varying from young adults to elders, and an equal amount of men and women.

Through the data collection and following discussion, the perspectives offered are the informants' experiences on the concepts of democracy, community empowerment, poverty and partnership, in relation to their participation in, or them being affected by, the development project. Through these captions I have sought perspectives on transparency regarding the execution of the water well projects, whether the process has been carried out democratically, whether the projects have promoted equality, especially regarding the dynamics between men and women.

1.3.2 Research questions

The research done as a part of this thesis is qualitative, taking form as semi-structured interviews. Through the research I seek to answer the following question:

How do the local inhabitants experience that they are affected by MM's development work in Lavulema and Mamaka in Sierra Leone?

In addition, there are four sub questions to help getting answers to the main question:

- 1. How has the receiving partners been experiencing the development project in terms of democracy?**
- 2. How has the receiving partners been experiencing the development project in terms of poverty?**
- 3. How have the receiving partners been experiencing the development project in terms of community empowerment?**
- 4. What are the receiving partners' experiences of partnership?**

1.3.3 Central concepts

Development can simply be identified as change. Some adds a positive emphasis that development is a “good change”, but there are also those that consider development to be a “bad change”. In development theory, the term development is usually confined to the concept of development in the Global South, but development is naturally something that takes place in all countries and regions of the world. As I will show in chapter 2, the concept of development in the context of aid has changed throughout the history of development aid, from a focus on economic growth to a broader view, including quality of human life and expansion of people’s freedoms (Hopper, 2012, pp. 10-12).

Development aid distinguishes itself from the concept of emergency aid by the focus on assisting poor communities in developing countries where the government fails to provide social structures such as infrastructure, health care, educational facilities, sanitary assets, and even leisure activities for youths. Rolf Rosenkranz explains the concept like this:

Development aid is meant to ensure a country’s sustainable growth over the long run [...] is mostly funded by international transfer of public funds either directly from one government to another through bilateral aid, or indirectly through non-governmental organisations or a multilateral agency (Rosenkranz, 2011).

Democracy is a system of government based on the emphasis of people’s freedom, and equality between people. The word literally means “rule by the people”, and derives from Greek: demos = people, kratos = rule. In a democracy, the power is either held by elected representatives or directly by the people. More generally, democracy implies the citizens opportunity to participate in and influence decision making processes, and people’s equal rights to do so (Hovde et al., 2018).

Empowerment is defined in the English Oxford dictionary as “the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one’s life and claiming one’s rights (English Oxford Dictionary, 2018a).

Community empowerment: With regards to the definition of empowerment, community empowerment can be understood as the process of enabling communities to increase control over their lives.

Gender equality is referred to as giving the same opportunities, rights and benefits to both men and women. Gender equality is a human right, and empowering women is an essential part when promoting gender equality (UNFPA, 2017).

Partnership in general can simply be defined as the state of being a partner or partners (English Oxford Dictionary, 2018b). In the context of development, partnership refers to the aspiration of an equal partnership between a donor organisation and a receiving community.

Poverty strikes a vast part of the world's population. Although the share of human beings living in poverty today is declining, millions of people are still suffering from extreme poverty. We divide into two concepts of poverty in order to separate between different degrees of poverty: *absolute* poverty, and *relative* poverty. Those that lack basic needs such as food, shelter and clothes are regarded as living in absolute poverty. The poverty line today is 1,90 dollars per day, and a 2017 count shows that 767 million people today live under such conditions. Relative poverty refers to being poor compared to the majority of a country's population. Each nation sets its own national poverty line (FN, 2017).

The Global South/North: I have chosen to use this dichotomy when referring to the respectively developing and (post)-industrial countries. It can be discussed whether this term is fair and suitable, seeing that there are vast differences within the groups of countries, but as the scope of this thesis is limited, I will not provide a debate on this here.

1.3.4 Limitations

This study is limited to examine one specific project, in a small geographic area. This means that my research will not provide generalized answers about how receivers of international aid experience their situation but is limited to the experiences of specific persons in a specific society. My background and, cultural understanding, etc., may affect my analysis, and may in some ways make it incomplete or weak. The collection of data is conducted over a few days in each of the two villages that are subjects for the research, which limited my possibilities to use

additional methods. This is not an evaluation of the development project as a whole, but a study of how some of the community members in Lavulema and Mamaka experience that they are affected by the development project.

1.4 The research design of the thesis

Amartya Sen's book *Development as Freedom* (1999) lays the theoretical foundation for the research. Sen's understanding of development as individual freedom both as means and as an end is, as I see it, similar to the core of MM's development program and its vision.

My aim for this study is to find out how the local inhabitants of two small societies in Sierra Leone have experienced the impact of MM's work, and in this respect, make an empirical contribution to Amartya Sen's development theory in addition to an empirical contribution to how the receiving partners experience that they are affected by MM's development work.

I have conducted qualitative studies in Sierra Leone, doing semi-structured interviews with the main goal being listening to the narratives and experiences of the local inhabitants, and I have sought to interview a wide representative of peoples, both individually and in focus groups. The choice of method is related to the ontological view *constructivism*, an approach to knowledge that understands the reality as a social and personal construct, and an *interpretivist* epistemological position, meaning that the social researcher needs to find the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2008, pp. 15-19).

Furthermore, the choice of method is informed by a phenomenological approach, meaning that I make an endeavour to comprehend the social phenomena explored in this research as perceived by the actors, or informants (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2017, pp. 44-45).

When selecting the informants, I chose to interview an equal amount of men and women with ages ranging from young adults to elders, to give a varied selection, representing both genders.

1.5 Scholarly context

1.5.1 Questions about scholarly understanding

The central concepts in this thesis, such as poverty, development aid, freedom, empowerment, democracy and partnership may have a distinct meaning in the context of social science and development theory.

Empowerment: In the context of development aid, the use of the term empowerment has been debated. Rajasundaram et al. offers a view on empowerment that puts the receiving partner in a development project at the centre:

Participation, by putting the emphasis on the needs and the viewpoints of the individuals and groups, becomes the key concept of development communication. Recourse to a systemic methodology and the implementation of horizontal processes — in which the people are directly associated with the communication process and are thus more likely to formulate their problems themselves, become aware of new possibilities, and take their knowledge and their viewpoints into consideration in the communication process — constitute the major elements of its methodology. [...] Empowerment is often seen as something one can do to another person. This is not so. People are empowered by an environment that gives them the freedom to express themselves. (1996, p. 18)

One of the objectives for the development project researched in this thesis is to empower the communities that participate in the project. The theoretical foundation for the discussion of the findings provides a freedom-based view on development. Considering these facts, empowering communities and people should progress through giving them freedom to participate, make decisions and to be heard.

Poverty: the general definition of poverty, as mentioned in subchapter 1.3.3., is mainly based on income, and coverage of basic needs like food, shelter and clothes. However, the concept of poverty covers a broader area than merely income and basic needs, as shown through Amartya Sen's theory, which will be explained further in chapter 2. Lack of possibilities is also a source of poverty in terms of political rights, welfare facilities, access to education, health care and so on.

Partnership: In my interpretation, the partnership model of the PID programme builds on a participatory approach. The local partners – both the civil society (UMC) and the local community members are given information about their possibilities and requested to form the projects themselves. In the context of this thesis, the term partnership means the collaboration and participation of the local community members.

Sustainable development: The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 officially came into force January 1st, 2016. The agenda states that

Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. [...] Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. To this end, there must be promotion of sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion, and promoting integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems. (UN, 2018)

The PID programme proposes a sustainable development model, hence the discussion chapter in this thesis attempts to prove whether the PID model can work in coherence with the UN Sustainable Development goals 2030.

1.5.2 Scholarly discipline

This thesis is based on a socio-anthropological study, interested in grassroots' perspective on and experiences of development aid in their local community. It can also be placed within the discipline of development studies, as the study is an empirical contribution to existing development theory. Social anthropology is a part of the social sciences, and the scholarly discipline of this study influences my choice of method, which I will elaborate on in chapter 3.

1.6 The structure and organisation of the thesis

The following chapters will consist of two main parts – part one presents the theoretical framework more thoroughly, the methods I use to gather data material, and background information about MM's development project(s). In part two I will present the findings from my field work, a discussion based on theory and findings, and a concluding chapter.

There are seven chapters in this thesis. In chapter 2, the theoretical framework for the thesis will be presented. As there is little existing research on the topic presented in the thesis, the findings will be discussed in the light of the main theory presented in chapter 2.

The methodology of the research will be thoroughly presented and discussed in chapter 3. Here, the research paradigm will be addressed, as well as choice of methods and selection of informants. In this chapter I will also address reflections concerning the field work, and lastly, a discussion of the quality of the research.

Chapter 4 provides background information about Sierra Leone and the organisations involved in the development project. The need and presence of development aid in Sierra Leone is closely connected to the country's history, and understanding the context and circumstances gives a foundation for the discussion of the findings.

The findings from Lavulema and Mamaka will be presented in chapter 5. The sub-chapters are divided to represent the main topics of the research (sub-)questions, and the statements given by the informants will be sorted and presented.

Chapter 6 is a discussion of the findings presented in chapter 5. It is also divided into sub-chapters, in accordance with the sub-chapters in chapter 5. The findings will mainly be discussed in the light of the theoretical framework presented in chapter 2, as well as briefly discussed in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

Chapter 7 presents a conclusion to the discussion. The research questions are attempted answered, and a short attention to my contribution and further thoughts is given.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides the theoretical framework for the discussion in chapter 6. Firstly, I will give an outline of the history of development theory and show how theories have changed through the years. Secondly, I will account for Amartya Sen's book *Development as Freedom* (1999), that will be the main source for the theoretical framework.

2.1 The history of development

This subchapter provides the historical background, creating the context for Sen's development theory. I will use Oddvar Smukkestad's book *Utvikling eller avvikling* (2008) as a source for the history of development theory. Smukkestad has been working for NORAD¹ and has taught development theory at several universities in Norway, in addition to writing textbooks about development theory. His book affords an interdisciplinary introduction to political and economic development theory, that will create a contextual understanding of the main theory.

2.1.1 Discussion of the development term

The concept of development is broad and equivocal. To understand what development implies, Smukkestad (2008) refers to Gilbert Rist and how he compares it with the growth of a living organism. This process has four indications: (1) the organism grows in a fixed direction, with a particular purpose, (2) nature works continuously. Despite constant changes the organism remains the same from birth to death, (3) Each phase depends on the previous phase, just like the flower must come before the fruit, and (4) it is irreversible. Once a level of development has been reached, one cannot reverse the process (Smukkestad, 2008, p. 19). Even though comparing the development of a society to how an organism grows can be deceiving, it gives a clear idea of what the term involves. When speaking of developing countries and societies, it is usually in a positive manner, meaning that development implies a change for the better/progress. However, development is a complicated process that takes place on different levels, both on an individual and a societal level, and in different segments of a society. A change for an individual might affect the society in a negative way, and vice versa. Furthermore,

¹ NORAD: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad, 2018)

what one culture or person sees as a positive change, may not be wanted or seen as a good thing in a different culture. As I will discuss in the following section, development theory has been much debated, and has evolved and changed over the past decades. I will begin with presenting the main development paradigms.

According to Gilbert Rist, the history of development aid traces back to the Marshall Plan, initiated by the American foreign affairs minister George C. Marshall in 1947 to support the rebuilding of a devastated Europe after the World War II (Rist, 2009, pp. 69-70). Smukkestad elaborates how the success with the Marshall Plan led the USA to the commence of development aid in the poor countries of the South and was soon joined by countries within the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). Today numerous actors operate in the aid business: governments, multilateral organisations like IMF (the International Monetary Fund) and some of the specialized agencies of the UN, and various NGO's (Non-Governmental Organisations) (Smukkestad, 2008, pp. 23-24).

2.1.2 The school of modernization

As the western, global development project evolved in the 1950s, so did the rhetoric used to differ between the donor countries and the receiving countries. "Underdeveloped" became the antonym to "developed" and was the term for poor countries that needed development aid. The term GDP (Gross Domestic Product) was created to measure the level of development, which consequently led to a hierarchical ranging of countries (Smukkestad, 2008, p. 38).

Due to the success of the Marshall Plan in the north and the liquidation of the imperial power in the south, there was a great optimism towards development aid, both in the north and in the south. Smukkestad writes that the development ideal of the 1950s and -60s was the western industrial society, and the main task was modernisation. The goal was to transform "underdeveloped" countries from a traditional, premodern agricultural society to a modern, industrial consumer society, and the change was measured in economic growth. This dualistic view became one of the main features of the development theory of this period, the other feature was the belief that economic growth and development necessarily follows a linear and evolutionary progression that is similar for all countries (2008, pp. 39-42). These perspectives have subsequently been criticized for being ethnocentric, and for being a continuation of the western imperialism.

2.1.3 The dependency theory

According to Smukkestad the development optimism of the 1950s and -60s declined during the next decade. Pioneers like Paúl Prebisch, Hans Singer, Dudley Seers and Gunnar Myrdal began to doubt that the western, economy-oriented model could solve the development countries' problems. Especially Prebisch was to become an important influence and developed a structuralist development theory. Critics had seen that the prevailing development theories were not adapted to the developing countries, because there were structural differences between the industrial countries and the development countries. The differences were both internal in the development countries and external in the relations between development and industrial countries. These structural variations caused an uneven distribution of trade profit in the world market, in favour of the industrial countries. This phenomenon is also known as the dependency theory and draws on the dichotomy that the world economy can be divided in centrum and periphery. The main line of the dependency theory is that economic development in industrial (centrum) countries leads to underdevelopment in the development (periphery) countries. Furthermore, this creates mutual dependence between the centrum and the periphery, because development and underdevelopment are two sides of the same coin (Smukkestad, 2008, pp. 71-79). The breakthrough of the dependence theory was a turning point in the development debate, because the spotlight was now drawn towards the negative influence of the western imperialism and the flaws of the international system. In addition, scholars from the global south got more influence on the development discourse, and by that the west would no longer monopolise the development debate (Smukkestad, 2008, p. 90). With the new perspective that emerged in the 1970's, a more nuanced picture of development came into view. Building on Prebisch' development theory, structuralists like Seers and Myrdal emphasized the complexity of development and advocated that both internal conditions as well as external conditions like imperialism and international trade contributed to the development countries' problems. Seers was questioning the use of GDP as an indicator on development, and wanted to turn away from measuring development in GDP:

The questions to ask about a country's development are therefore: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result development even if per capita income doubled. (Seers cited in Smukkestad, 2008, p. 101)

2.1.4 The market liberalism of the 1980s

A neoconservative wave swept over the western countries in the 1980s. With Margaret Thatcher as the British prime minister, and the American president Ronald Reagan, a new era of market liberalism began and, for the first time after World War II, a growing distrust in the government's interference with the market emerged. These perceptions influenced the development sector and led by a group of American and English social economists who was labelled as the *counter revolution*, the structuralists, the dependency theory and the school of modernisation was heavily criticised. The structuralists were blamed for putting too much weight on a strong state, which was opposite to what the counter revolution saw as conducive to development, while the dependency theory was accused for turning the coin by opposing to what the school of modernisation had set as causes for development and underdevelopment.

The counterrevolutionary did also criticize how the politics of development up till now had had an unbalanced aim at improving the infrastructure and sought to develop the educational system as well as investing in human development as an addition. The market mechanism was presented as the solution to the challenges the developing countries faced, with economic incentives and proper prices as efficiency tools.

One of the liberal economists, Deepak Lal, saw international development aid as particularly positive and effective if given under certain conditions (*conditionality*). Another common term was *policy dialogue*, that implied a guidance in the politics of economy from the donor country's government to the receiving country's government, as we shall see in the next paragraph. At the same time an awareness regarding environmental issues was slowly emerging (Smukkestad, 2008, pp. 126-139).

2.1.5 Participatory development

As described by Paul Hopper (2012), participatory development is a key term in contemporary development debates. Hopper defines the term like this:

Broadly speaking, participatory development entails involving local people at all stages in the development process, including identifying what needs to be done and the politics that need to be formulated, so that they have a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives. (2012, p. 160).

The issue raises questions about self-determination, power, empowerment and the purpose of development. The notion of participatory development is part of the widening of the development term as described in the previous subchapter and was given attention already in the mid-1970s. According to Hopper, the current development approaches at that time were criticized for being “top-downist, western-dominated and Eurocentric” (2012, p. 159), marginalizing indigenous expertise and knowledge. By and large, local populations were now integrated into the development process, and the theory and practice of participatory development has since the mid-1980s become part of mainstream development (Hopper, 2012, pp, 159-160). While this is the case, there are also some critiques concerning participatory development. First of all, there is the issue of power dynamics within a community or a group, which challenges the vision of a fair and democratic representation of the community in a decision-making process. Secondly, various development institutions have been accused of practicing participatory development only “on paper,” letting NGO development experts and governments play the leading part. Thirdly, the objective of empowerment, which has played a central role in the theory of participatory development, has been criticised for being too vague, in part because empowerment is a wide concept with many dimensions (Hopper, 2012, pp. 161-167). Another essential point that follows the criticism towards participatory development, according to Hopper, is how participation is more frequently seen as a measure for transforming existing power structures. The rhetoric is changing: Rather than striving for empowerment, the discussion is increasingly revolving around transformation or social change (2012, p. 166). In this discussion lies the notion that there are various competing conceptions of participation, empowerment and transformation. In my understanding, participation is a means for empowering the community members to make them able to transform their society. The transformation should work on different levels, politically, institutionally, as well as in the civil society and on grassroots’ level, and the aim should be to reduce the poverty gap by lifting burdens like health issues, sanitary challenges, unemployment, and illiteracy.

2.1.6 New dimensions in the development term

The theories described above has a strong focus on economics and how the market mechanism affects development. Smukkestad brings forth new dimensions of the development term that got attention in the 1980s and 1990s. One of them was the environmental challenges. Up to this point, development and environment had been considered separate concerns, but now an awareness of the relationship between these issues grew. The term *global interdependence*

became acknowledged, meaning that the international community recognised the fact that the environmental issues of the North and the South was intertwined and mutually affecting one another. Second, the term *sustainable development* got leverage with the formulation of the Brundtland-report², that defined sustainable development as complying with the needs of the present without spoiling the possibilities of meeting the need of future generations. Third, as an answer to the critique of GNP being the only measurement of development, the Human Development Index (HDI) was created. The HDI consists of three indicators: Life expectancy, level of education (literacy) and standard of living (based on GNP), with the intention of identifying some of the factors important for a human being to live a valued life. Lastly, after decades of neglecting the women's role in development work, gender and feminism was set on the agenda. Seeing that women in the Global South are more vulnerable than men, and consequently are prone to suffer more severely from poverty, the focus turned towards changing the gender relations (Smukkestad, 2008, pp. 140-162). In relation to the issue of empowerment, as described in the previous subchapter, bettering women's conditions are of importance. The power structures between men and women are, unfortunately, in many parts of the developing world in favour of men. Hence, to empower women is an integral part of empowering and transforming communities.

The next subchapter presents an author that has taken the development term to a new level and adds a dimension he sees as fundamentally important both as the primary end and principal means for development: Freedom.

2.2 Amartya Sen's development theory

Amartya Sen's book *Development as Freedom* provides the main theoretical framework for this study. The Indian philosopher and economist is the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, and the winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economic Science. He has published several works within various academic disciplines, and a common theme is economics in relation to social justice

² In 1983, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was formed to formulate a program for global change and to overcome the global environmental challenges. The commission is popularly known as the "Brundtland Commission", named after their leader, Gro Harlem Brundtland (Smukkestad, 2008, pp.140-145).

and poverty, developing country issues and minority rights. He has taught at major leading universities in India, Europe and the USA (Filseth, 2014).

Sen presents his development theory as a contrast and critique towards what he sees as narrower views of development and argues that development should not only be measured in growth of GNP or individual incomes, industrialization, technological advance or social modernization. Sen advocates that development should rather be recognized as an increase of people's actual freedoms. (1999, p. 3). Understanding development as expanding the freedom of the individuals is the core of Sen's work. In Sen's perspective, one should view freedom as both (1) the *primary end* and (2) the *principal means* of development, what he respectively calls the "constitutive role" and the "instrumental role" of development (1999, p. 36).

2.2.1 Five categories of freedom

Sen defines five categories of freedom that all are essential instrumental components in a development process: (1) *Political freedoms*, which regards civil rights, freedom of speech, transparent and just elections and equality in all these areas. (2) *Economic facilities* – these are the individuals' respective possibilities to use economic resources for consumption, production or exchange. In a development context, the wealth of a country does not necessarily reflect the wealth of all its inhabitants. Consequently, the distribution of wealth within a country will point towards the relation between national income and wealth, on the one hand, and the economic entitlements of individuals on the other. (3) *Social opportunities* comprise the welfare institutions a society offers, such as health care and education. These are facilities that will not only enhance people's quality of life, in addition they may give opportunities and tools for individuals to be able to participate in economic and political activities. (4) *Transparency guarantees* refers to the freedom of living in an open and relatively safe society with a basic presumption of trust. Preventing corruption is one of the effects of transparency guarantees. (5) *Protective security* is all the (institutional) services that creates a social safety net for the population, such as famine relief, unemployment benefits, or income guarantees for destitute (1999, pp. 38-40).

Sen explains how these five categories of freedoms are not only a contributor to an individual's potential of living her life more freely, they are also interconnected with each other. Access to health care and education influences an individual's possibilities to take part in and contribute

to a country's economic growth. Co-ordinately, national economic growth can lead to an improvement in social services such as education, health care, and effective crisis handling. Education enables people to take part in the political arena, and a vigorous grassroots' participation in political activities strengthens the democracy. Sen draws attention to how the "creation of social opportunities [contributes to] significant reductions in mortality rates which, in turn, can help to reduce birth rates, reinforcing the influence of basic education – especially female literacy and schooling – on fertility behaviour". (1999, pp. 40-41). As we have seen, these linkages are emphasizing the importance of the instrumental role of freedom in a development process. The next subchapter will go into details on how the five categories of freedoms relates to poverty and development.

2.2.2 Poverty as capability deprivation

After examining the five categories of freedom, it becomes apparent how neglecting people's freedoms affects the determining factors when it comes to capabilities.

Political freedoms affect an individual's civil and democratic rights; hence, lack of such freedoms obstructs the capability to participate freely in the public debate and the political life. Economic freedoms are directly influencing the capability to make use of one's incomes, which in turn affects an individual's or a family's possibilities for education, health care and even fulfilling basic needs like food, shelter and clothing.

Social opportunities connect to capabilities in terms of the provision of sanitary conditions, health care, education and welfare; these are factors that affect the possibilities to lead the life one values, and our opportunities to make use of our possessions. Transparency guarantees shapes the way citizens interact and their freedoms to be treated fair and with openness, which in turn determines the capability to lead the life one values. Lastly, protective security relates to capabilities by the virtue of providing a safety net which contributes to smoothening out differences in the population, and in more grave situations, accommodating emergency relief. In the light of his perspective on development as enhancing the basic freedoms of people, Sen widens the concept of poverty to identify more than low income. Seeing how lack of freedoms impedes development, in Sen's view, poverty is not merely low income but rather the deprivation of capabilities. Sen emphasizes that low income can be a major cause of poverty, but he sees low income as merely *instrumentally* significant, while other deprivations are, in Sen's view, *intrinsically* important (1999, p. 87). Other deprivations, in this context, can be lack

of education, little or no access to health care, restrictions on freedom of speech, lack of democratic rights, and so on. There is, accordingly, a direct link between lack of freedoms and deprivation of capabilities. Individual advantages or disadvantages determines to what degree income impacts communities, families or individuals. The relationship between income and capability varies with factors such as age, gender and social roles, location, occurrence of diseases and other circumstances over which a person may have no, or limited, control (Sen, 1999, p. 88). Furthermore, Sen argues that certain characteristics can influence a person's capability for turning income into usage, such as handicaps or sickness. In addition, distribution of income within a family may be disproportionate, for example by favouring boys over girls when it comes to education, medical help and nutrition. In the case of unequal distribution of income within a family, the total income will not reflect the extent of deprivation of the neglected family members. Lastly, relative poverty in terms of income can lead to absolute deprivation of capabilities – being relatively poor in a rich country can obstruct a person's capability to lead the life he or she values, and might cause social exclusion (1999, pp. 88-89). Evidently, there is a strong connection between poverty as low income and poverty as capability deprivation, and Sen explains how the two are interrelated:

[S]ince enhanced capabilities in leading a life would tend, typically, to expand a person's ability to be more productive and earn a higher income, we would also expect a connection going from capability improvement to greater earning power and not only the other way around. The latter connection can be particularly important for the removal of income poverty. It is not only the case that, say, better basic education and health care improve the quality of life directly, they also increase a person's ability to earn an income and be free of income-poverty as well. The more inclusive the reach of basic education and health care, the more likely it is that even the potentially poor would have a better chance of overcoming penury. (1999, p. 90).

In the following section, we shall take a deeper dive into the relationship between income poverty and capability poverty and explore why Sen finds capabilities to be so intrinsically important when fighting poverty.

A key term to comprehend poverty as capability deprivation, as I understand Sen, is inequality. Inequality in terms of income, social benefits and institutional services like education and health care, but also individual conditions like i.e. ailments or handicaps. In this case, we can see development as enhancing the well-being of individuals. Sen states that as a starting point, we

use incomes and commodities as the material basis for our well-being. However, there are several contingent circumstances that influences what use we can make of our given bundle of commodities. Sen describes five different factors that creates variations between our incomes and what use (the well-being and freedom) we get out of them. (1) *Personal heterogeneities*: Different characteristics like gender, age, disability and illness creates diversity in people's needs. A pregnant woman may need more nutritional intake, an older person may need more support and help, a person suffering from a chronic disease may need higher income to pay the medical bills.

(2) *Environmental diversities*: Variations in climate can affect the use a person can make of her income. In a cold climate, people would need to spend a higher amount on clothing than in a warm climate. Flooding, rainfall and drought affects infrastructure, housing and food conditions, especially in the Global South. Epidemical environment (presence of diseases such as AIDS, malaria or cholera) and pollution influences the quality of life.

(3) *Variations in social climate*: Social conditions like public educational arrangements, the extensiveness of crime and violence and access to health care are also an influence on our ability to convert income and commodities into use. (4) *Differences in relational perspectives*: Behavioural patterns vary between communities, as do commodity requirements. A *relatively* poor individual in a rich country may be inhibited from managing some elementary "functionings" such as participating in community life.

(5) *Distribution within the family*: The well-being or freedom of individuals depends on how the total income of the family is distributed. Thus, there can be vast differences in the opportunities of individual family members. (Sen, 1999, pp. 70-71). All these five factors contribute to create inequalities and influences a person's well-being and freedom(s).

2.2.3 Sen's informational basis

To explain why the choice of evaluative approach is of such importance, Sen discusses two of the major theories of social ethics and justice, namely utilitarianism and libertarianism. I will not go into detail of the two theories but shortly explain their main features and account for Sen's critiques of the two theories.

What informational base we use, influences our evaluation of justice, and as an extension of that, policy making. The excluded information is just as important as our informational basis. Sen puts it like this:

Informational *exclusions* are important constituents of an evaluative approach. The excluded information is not permitted to have any direct influence on evaluative judgements, and while this is usually done in an implicit way, the character of the approach may be strongly influenced by insensitivity to the excluded information. (1999, p. 56).

Sen critiques the two theories for not giving an adequate evaluative approach and renders a different approach. Hence, he presents his “capability approach to justice”, to which I will give most attention.

In a utilitarian perspective, the principles of justice rely on utilities, and the maximizing of utilities for the greater number of individuals. Sen describes how in Jeremy Bentham’s classical form of utilitarianism, “utility” is defined as pleasure, happiness or satisfaction (1999, p. 56). In more modern forms of utilitarianism, “utility” is rather seen as fulfilment of desire. Nevertheless, neither the classic nor the modern interpretation of utilitarianism takes into consideration the *distribution* of utilities, nor does it attach importance to claims of rights and freedoms. These are Sen’s most important critique of utilitarianism as an informational base (1999, pp. 56-57). Libertarianism, on the other hand, does not put any emphasis to the individuals’ happiness or fulfilment of desire, but pays attention to the various liberties and rights that people enjoy. In modern libertarian theory, broad classes of rights – varying from personal liberties to property rights – is given political priority over the achievement of social goals, such as the removal of unemployment, deprivation or destitution. The problem with this perspective is, according to Sen, that giving a strict precedence to liberties while ignoring the consequences this kind of prioritizing may give, may not enhance the well-being and freedoms of individuals, despite safeguarding people’s liberties. Accordingly, libertarianism cannot serve as an adequate informational basis of justice. (1999, pp. 63-67).

Let’s turn to Sen’s informational basis, what he calls the “capability approach to justice.” This approach focuses on freedom and the “*individual capabilities to do things that a person has reason to value*” (1999, p. 56). This approach builds on the foundation that utilities are a person’s possibilities to make use of his or hers bundle of commodities. In other words, a person’s individual capabilities, which influences our well-being. Sen explains that shortage of income is undebated a major cause for deprivations but referring to Rawls’ he points out that although studying poverty in terms of income is a good starting point, we should not end there.

Sen draws on John Rawls' classical analysis of "primary goods" to explain his view on utilities, well-being and their connection to poverty:

Primary goods are general-purpose means that help anyone to promote his or her ends, and include "rights, liberties and opportunities, income and wealth, and the social basis of self-respect." The concentration on primary goods in the Rawlsian framework relates to his view of individual advantages in terms of the opportunities the individuals enjoy to pursue their respective objects (1999, p. 72).

Sen stresses the fact that there are great variations on how individuals perceive well-being, and what resources different individuals need to generate the ability to lead a life they value, and suggests that we "concentrate on the *actual living* that people manage to achieve (or, going beyond that, on the *freedom* to achieve actual livings that one can have reason to value)" (Sen, 1999, p. 73). As seen in the previous subchapter, there are five factors that affects to what degree an individual has the capability to achieve the freedom to lead a life she has reason to value: Personal heterogeneities, environmental diversities, variations in social climate, differences in relational perspectives and distribution within the family. In this perspective the informational basis for evaluating poverty, in terms of inequality, utilities and well-being, is broadened from merely income to the individual capabilities to do things that a person has reason to value.

Sen draws a few examples to illustrate why it is important to judge inequality in broader terms than merely income: A rich person who is deprived of opportunities to participate in the political arena, may not be poor in terms of income, but is still poor in the sense of lacking an essential freedom. A person that suffers from unemployment but receives social care money from the government may not be regarded as poor in terms of income but may still not able to lead the life he finds valuable (1999, pp. 94-95). Equality does not necessarily mean treating everyone the exact same way – some may have conditions or needs that requires greater "subsidizing" to create the same options as for others that may be more self-helped.

2.2.4 The role of the market

Sen's perspective on freedom as both means and goal for development also extends to the role of the market, and the basic importance of the freedom of market in itself:

We have good reasons to buy and sell, to exchange, and to seek lives that can flourish on the basis of transactions. To deny that freedom in general would be in itself a major failing of a society. This fundamental recognition is *prior* to any theorem we may or may not be able to prove (on which more presently) in showing what the culmination outcomes of markets are in terms of incomes, utilities and so on. (1999, p. 112)

Furthermore, Sen emphasizes how free seeking of employment is an important part of free markets. This has been an issue in the past and continues to be so in the present. In many countries in Asia and Africa, labour bondage is still a prevalent problem. Denying people to seek work away from one's traditional bosses is carried out with force and terror, and this issue also involves a battle for the ownership of the land on which the forced labourers work.

An aspect Sen underlines is the system of child labour, which is intertwined with a weakness of primary education. This is a complex topic; on the one hand, many economists agree that abolishing child labour may worsen the economic situation of the families involved and thus not improve the children's quality of life. On the other hand, in a developmental and community perspective, losing the opportunity to education (as is the case for many children forced to work) has long term negative effects for both individuals and for the whole society.

A third major issue Sen draws out when it comes to freedom of labour is how women in many third world countries are obstructed from seeking employment outside of the family. In addition to being a serious violation of women's liberty and gender equity, it weakens women's capability to be economically independent.

Sen offers a dialectic approach to the role of the market in a development context, drawing on both liberal and structuralist views. In Sen's perspective, the market is one of many aspects that needs to be taken into consideration when talking about development. A regulated, fair market mechanism can contribute to developing a country and Sen advocates for a many-sided approach to development. Correspondingly, the functioning of markets needs to be balanced with the role of the government and other political and social institutions. (1999, pp. 111-145).

2.2.5 The importance of democracy

Why is democracy so important? Sen writes that in international debates about economic needs and political freedoms in developing countries, there has been a repeated rhetoric of what

should come first: “[...] removing poverty and misery, or guaranteeing political liberty and civil rights, for which poor people have little use anyway?” (1999, p. 147). Sen gives three examples of arguments against political freedoms and civil rights; the first one claims that such freedoms trips up economic growth and development; the second argues that when given the choice, poor people will choose fulfilling their economic needs over having political freedoms; and the third promotes the view that the emphasis on political freedoms is a distinctively “western” phenomenon that goes against, for instance, “Asian values” where discipline and order supposedly are of priority (1999, pp. 148-149).

The author argues that political liberties and civil rights are preeminent to economic needs, and lists three reasons why:

1. their *direct* importance in human living associated with basic capabilities (including that of political and social participation).
2. their *instrumental* role in enhancing the hearing that people get in expressing and supporting their claims to political attention (including the claims of economic needs);
3. their *constructive* role in the conceptualization of “needs” (including the understanding of “economic needs” in a social context). (1999, p. 148)

Sen emphasizes the importance of the opposition’s role. Democracy does not function as a “super cure” regardless of the circumstances. In this context, Sen defines democracy as “creating a set of opportunities” (1999, p. 155), and calls for the citizens in general, and the opposition in particular, to make use of their democratic and political rights. As a result, they can put pressure on the government to yield changes.

If we look at Sen’s five basic freedoms, ensuring people’s political liberties and civil rights and freedoms are integral parts in the provision of political freedoms. To have the freedom to achieve the life one has reason to value implies that one has the possibility to participate in decision-making processes and to express their opinions. In this sense, democracy is important not only on a national-political level, but also on a local level and in the civil society sector.

2.3 Placing the project within the theoretical discussion

2.3.1 A theoretical canvas for the discussion chapter

Differing from preceding theories, the central theme of Sen's theory of development is freedom. Sen's perspective of development as freedom is pervasive to all aspects of the societal and individual life, and influences what the poverty term implies and how development is measured. As described above, Sen lists five categories of freedoms: (1) Political freedoms, (2) Economic facilities, (3) Social opportunities, (4) Transparency guarantees and (5) Protective security. Based on Sen's ideas, development can be measured by the increase of people's freedoms in these five categories. After examining how the concept of freedom is widened to comprise many aspects of the societal and individual life, and how it affects development, it becomes evident how poverty seen as capability deprivation is a direct consequence of Sen's perspective on development as freedom. To illustrate, poor sanitary conditions like for instance lack of access to clean water, leads to diseases like diarrhoea, cholera and other waterborne illnesses. As Sen has demonstrated, suffering from a disease is a form of capability deprivation, and has an outcome on several parts of the human life. The possibility to work and earn money becomes reduced, the possibility to make use of the economic utilities one has may become reduced, the quality of life is reduced, the ability to take care of family and children becomes reduced, the participation in social and political life is negatively affected and in a long-term perspective, the life expectancy age falls. These outcomes are, in Sen's perspective, a deprivation of capabilities.

The partnership model presented and applied in the PID project is in line with the mode of participatory development that has been asserted in contemporary development work. Despite critiques against the theory of participatory development, it contains a positive starting point in terms of co-operating with the local communities and working from the basis of their expressed needs. Empowering the communities and their members through transformation and social change should happen in accordance to the people affected, thus it is important to listen to their opinions and needs. Then again, there is always the risk of presenting a deal that's hard to refuse, and consequently impose on people to change cultural norms or habits they do not wish for.

This study explores the findings from two villages in Sierra Leone, respectively Lavulema and Mamaka, where Metodistkirkens Misjonsselskap has implemented and carried out development

projects providing water wells. The research project presented in this thesis falls under Amartya Sen's theoretical standpoint on development and the findings will be discussed in the light of Sen's theory of development as freedom.

Considering Sen's theory, there are grounds to hypothesize that providing people with access to clean water will increase their quality of life and decrease poverty as understood by Sen. It is fair to assume that the partnership model provides a fair and, with regards to the community participating in the project, respectful and attentive method for implementing a development project.

3 METHODS

This chapter will provide information about my epistemological and ontological position, and the research strategy this study is built upon. The chosen methods will be elaborated and explained, as well as strategies and criteria for my selection. Furthermore, I will reflect upon my role as a researcher, ethical considerations and the validity and reliability of the study.

3.1 Qualitative research

This study is based on qualitative interviews with eight informants, both women and men, from two different villages where development aid has been given. In addition, there are four focus group interviews, two from each village where each of them is with only men or only women.

The purpose of a qualitative research interview is to learn and understand aspects of the daily life and world view of the interviewee. As Alan Bryman indicates, the subject matter of social sciences differs from the subject matter of the natural sciences, and this is a fundamental basis for qualitative research. When conducting social research, an opportunity opens to explore the subjective perspectives and opinions of people, and to get elaborate answers to the topics introduced. As a contrast, the objects of analysis of the natural sciences cannot attach meaning to their surroundings. With regards to the difference in the nature of social and natural sciences, a common methodology when studying people is to take a position of seeing the world through the eyes of the people being studied (Bryman, 2008, p. 385). As explained by Brinkmann and Kvale, this method is inspired by phenomenological philosophy. *Phenomenology*, founded by Edmund Husserl around year 1900 and further developed by Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty takes hold of the human consciousness, experience and their life world. In the context of qualitative research, phenomenology implies the intention of comprehending social phenomena as perceived by the actors, and to describe the world as perceived by the informants. Underlying is the notion that the “real” reality is what human beings perceive it to be (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2017, pp. 44-45). A common method within the phenomenological approach is to conduct semi-structured interviews, which can be characterised as neither an open conversation nor a closed questionnaire-based conversation (ibid., p. 46). Using an interview guide with suggestions for questions, that can lead to follow-up questions based on the informants’ answers, lets the researcher navigate through the topics

with sensitivity to the dynamics of the interview and to let the informant take part in the direction of the conversation.

Considering the research questions of this study, where my aim was to learn about the informants' experiences of a development project, I found that semi-structured interviews would be an appropriate method. As a supplement to this, there are four focus group interviews. As identified by Brinkmann and Kvale, the focus group interview is less structured than the semi-structured interview, and the researcher functions as a moderator, introducing topics to be discussed. The social interaction of a group can facilitate expressing views that usually are difficult to access, especially when the topic is sensitive or taboo (2017, pp. 179-180). Accordingly, I chose to have gender-differentiated focus groups, especially because one of the topics I wished to be discussed was gender and gender roles. Discrimination and violence against women has been, and is still, prevalent in developing countries, and Sierra Leone is no exception. Women in some parts of Sierra Leone are traditionally not given the opportunity to speak out their opinions in public meetings, or in the presence of the elders or their spouses (CELAD, 2018). Furthermore, there is often a hierarchy where the younger women are not allowed to speak in the presence of the elders. Hence, I thought that gender-differentiated focus groups could give me a chance to bypass these structures in addition to unveiling eventual differences between the life world of the men and the women.

Whilst there are many advocates for using qualitative methods when performing social research, there are also some critiques against qualitative research. Bryman exemplifies a couple of the criticisms which shows some of the disadvantages of using qualitative methods. Firstly, when collecting and analysing data, relying on the researcher's subjective view of what is significant makes qualitative research too subjective (2008, p. 391). Consequently, qualitative research is always interpreted through the eyes of the researcher and can never be a truly objective presentation of the findings. This leads us to Bryman's second critique; that a qualitative study is difficult to replicate. The researcher's chosen focal point as the selection of informants and the researcher's characteristics has an impact on the responses of the participants, and on the collection and analysis of data. These factors make it almost impossible to conduct a replication. Thirdly, the qualitative researcher gets a problem of generalisation. It is fair to assume that a study performed in a certain locality, conducted with

a small number of individuals cannot be representative of other settings (Bryman, 2008, pp. 391-392).

Despite the critiques against qualitative methods, I have chosen to gather data through qualitative interviews. There are several reasons for this. To begin with, this study aims to listen to the experiences of the inhabitants in Lavulema and Mamaka, and to learn about their experiences of the development project. A quantitative study would not give satisfying data, as I would miss out on the opportunity to let the informants take part in the conversation and influence its direction. As my standing point was to keep an open mind and to learn about the informants' experiences, qualitative interviews was an obvious choice for me because it could give me the opportunity to go into the depth of the conversation topics. Johannessen et al. confirms that when the researcher seeks to unveil the experiences and perceptions of people, the knowledge becomes most accessible when the informant can co-decide the discussion topics of the interview, an opportunity that is lost when the researcher uses a pre-structured questionnaire. Furthermore, Johannessen et al. points out that social phenomena are complex, and to reveal the distinctions of such, qualitative interviews would be necessary to capture the nuances and extent of the informants' answers (2004, pp. 132-133).

3.1.1 Research paradigm

There are many influencing factors when conducting social research. The researcher's cultural and personal background will inevitably lay a value basis for how the researcher conducts the study and interprets the data material. The researcher's epistemological and ontological position informs the understanding of, and acquisition of, knowledge (Bryman, 2008, pp. 13-21). Epistemological considerations deal with the various conceptions of how to gain knowledge about the world, and the societies and people in the world. Ontological discussions address our basic assumptions of the social reality of the world (Johannessen et al., 2010, p. 54). I will not go into detail of all the various perspectives, but rather explain the ones that are relevant to this study.

The aim of this research is to ascertain what kind of impact development aid has made, seen from the grassroots' perspective. Seeing that my goal is to understand how the locals in the recipient societies experiences their role as recipients, and how they experience the societal changes, I am inclined to take on an interpretivist, or constructivist perspective in my research,

as opposed to a positivist or objectivist approach. Positivism, as Bryman explains it, is an epistemological position that echoes the methods of the natural sciences, and distinguishes itself from interpretivism in the following principles:

- a. Only knowledge that is empirically confirmed by the senses can be regarded valid
- b. The aim is to test hypotheses and thereafter generalize
- c. Science must (and presumably can) be conducted objectively

(Bryman, 2008, p. 13).

The interpretivist approach was developed as an alternative to the positivist position. The critics of positivism upheld that a different scientific model was necessary when studying the social world, a model that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences. Consequently, the social researcher needs to find the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2008, pp. 15-16).

As a social researcher that seeks to understand and analyse the subjective meanings of the individuals in the societies I have visited, my ontological view is that knowledge about the reality I'm researching is a social and personal construct. This is what Bryman refers to as *constructionism*, and is opposed to *objectivism*, which is an ontological position that upholds the view that social phenomena and their meanings exist independently and external to social actors and situations (Bryman, 2008, pp. 18-19)

3.1.2 Research strategy

My research strategy was to perform qualitative interviews in addition to focus groups with only men/women. My aim is to find out what the informants think about the impact of development aid given to their society, and how they experience its effect on their daily life, especially in terms of gender equality, democratization, poverty and community empowerment. Both quantitative and qualitative research could have given me answers to these questions, but I have chosen a phenomenological approach which calls for a qualitative research strategy. The reason for this is that I wanted to gain a more profound understanding of the informants' views. Performing quantitative research would not provide adequate information for my purpose. Brinkmann and Kvale writes that "the qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover

their world prior to scientific explanations” (2017, p. 3). In other words, I sought to learn the perspective and the meanings of the informants. Qualitative interviews and focus groups gave me the opportunity to engage in conversations with the informants, and to ask follow-up questions, which helped to give me a deeper understanding of their opinions and of their context.

3.1.3 Relationship between method and problem statement

With this study, I seek to answer the following question:

How do the local inhabitants experience that they are affected by MM’s development work in Lavulema and Mamaka in Sierra Leone?

In addition, there are four sub-questions to help answer the main question:

1. How has the receiving partners been experiencing the development project in terms of democracy?
2. How has the receiving partners been experiencing the development project in terms of poverty?
3. How have the receiving partners been experiencing the development project in terms of community empowerment?
4. What are the receiving partners’ experiences of partnership?

There was originally a fifth sub-question, to find out the receiving partners experiences of gender roles and whether they had experienced any effect on gender roles in their community after the development project. Unfortunately, the data material from the research didn’t give me adequate and satisfying answers on the topics of gender roles and gender equality, I have therefore chosen to leave that part out.

Brinkmann and Kvale explores the idea of the interviewer as a traveller. The authors compare the epistemological position of the interview process as *construction of knowledge* to the traveller, using the metaphor to explain how the interviewer, like the traveller, curiously explores the landscape and the stories of the locals they meet. The possible meanings of the

narratives are later told and interpreted through the eye of the researcher, and the knowledge gained can be a source for reflection and consideration for the interviewer (2017, pp. 71-72). My goal was to understand and analyse the subjective meanings of the individuals in the communities I visited. Based upon my epistemological position and ontological view that knowledge about the reality I'm researching is a social and personal construct, it was natural to choose a qualitative method to gather data.

3.2 Selection of informants

I have interviewed four men and four women, from the villages Lavulema and Mamaka in Sierra Leone, whereas two men and two women in each village. All of them have been participants in the development project, either as part of the Project Management Committee (PMC), or contributing with labour or advice. The informants' age ranges from 30 to 55. In addition, I have conducted four focus group interviews, whereas two are with only men and two with only women: I conducted two group interviews in each village, where the age span is from 20 to 55 years.

3.2.1 Selection of informants in the light of the criteria for sampling

I had a few criteria for the selection of informants. Firstly, I wanted to interview an equal number of women and men in both villages. Secondly, I wished the informants to represent different age groups, viz. I requested talking to young adults, middle aged adults and elders. Thirdly, I was hoping that I would be able to talk to both participators and non-participators in the projects. Regarding the latter criterion, it turned out that nearly everyone in the villages had participated in one way or another – either as members of the project management committee, providing labour, food for the workers or served as advisors before and during the project execution.

Unfortunately, I couldn't get accommodations in the communities where I was doing the interviews, but rather in a nearby village. I was taken to the communities every morning, where the interpreter was waiting for me, and they were ready for me to begin the interviews. As a result, I didn't have the time and liberty to spend enough time with the community members to get to know them. This affected my possibilities to carefully select whom to interview. I did get the chance to request a specific age group or gender, and someone would then offer to

participate. If no one who suited my wishes were present, someone would go to the houses nearby and ask if anyone was willing to let themselves interview. In Mamaka, the interviews took place very close to the water well and everyone I interviewed had their house close to the water well. This may have influenced my results, I might have gotten different answers from a part of the population that didn't live as close to the water well and consequently did not benefit from it.

Another issue is that as I was at the mercy of someone to ask for me, for people to participate, as I could not speak the language. Therefore, there was a risk that they asked people they knew would give positive answers, or the answers they wanted me to get. On the other hand, I did get to interview people of different ages, and an equal number of women and men. The informants had also had various tasks in the water well project, and considering these facts, I did get an adequate selection of informants according to my criteria.

3.3 Preparation of interview guide

My interviews were semi-structured, which means that they were based on an interview guide with questions revolving around my main areas of interest. In addition, I asked follow-up questions when I thought it necessary to get more specific and/or elaborated answers. The questions in the interview guide were constructed according to the topics in my research questions; democracy, poverty reduction, gender equality, community empowerment and partnership. I've attempted to formulate the questions in an open, non-leading way, so that I would not put any diversions on the informant. When conducting interviews, it is common to begin with an introductory question, and narrow the topics as you go (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2017, pp. 166-167). I developed the interview guide with a set up that started with a general question about what they knew about the development project, and from there I started to narrow it down towards the more specific topics of democracy, community empowerment, poverty, and partnership.

3.4 Methods for the collection of the research material

In this sub-chapter I will address circumstances surrounding the field work, and furthermore, reflect upon my role as a researcher.

3.4.1 Discussion of what is done related to methodological theory

In both villages, the location for the interviews were outside in a place I judged to be a common area, and I found it not suitable to ask for privacy. Consequently, there were people hanging around, listening to the interviews. On the positive side, the location seemed to be neutral, the interviews were performed in a place that was neither my “turf” or in their private space. Nevertheless, this may have affected the informant’s willingness to give sincere answers. I also reflected upon the fact that the space we were in affects the conversation, and since the interviews took place close to the water well it might have created a sphere and mindset that revolved around the specific project when answering questions. I found it challenging to get deeper answers to my questions, for instance about gender roles and whether the project had had any effect on their perspectives on gender. On this particular topic of gender equality, I acknowledge that location and the audience made it inappropriate to dig into their perspectives on gender roles and what their experiences of the project’s eventual impact was. When I tried, my impression was that they didn’t want to say anything that could put possible future projects in jeopardy.

Before the interviews I had hoped to spend more time in the communities to get to know the people a bit and by that gain their trust and be able to observe their daily life. This was not the case, as I explained in the section above. As a result, my experience was that the informants were very focused on the immediate and concrete outcomes of getting the water well. There is, not surprisingly, a huge gap between my agenda as an academic trying to learn something about their experiences when it comes to topics like poverty, gender equality, community empowerment and democracy, and their perception of me coming to their community asking questions about a development aid project.

My method was to start by telling them about myself, what my research was about and that I was interested in getting their personal opinions and experiences. I initiated the interview with asking in very general terms what they knew about the project and how it came about. Then I elaborated with more detailed questions about their experiences connected to the topics of my research questions. I tried to ask the questions in a non-leading manner, to ensure that I didn’t guide them to their answer. As I do not speak neither Mende or Temne, which are the common languages in the respective communities, and few of the informants spoke adequate English, I had an interpreter present in all the interviews. This was a person well known in the

communities and had a high status. In both the communities, the interpreter had been a part of the Project Management Committee.

I chose to have focus groups because I hoped that the women and men in the focus groups would feel that they could speak more freely when they were together. I also wanted to ask them to discuss in the language they were most comfortable with before giving me an answer. In that way, I thought they might feel freer to discuss without me listening to the discussion before they gave me an answer. However, I found that having an interpreter made the focus group somewhat difficult. It would be hard for him to translate the discussion as it went on, he would probably not have the time to keep me currently updated with the conversation without interrupting the natural flow of the discussion, and I was at the risk of missing out on distinctions and details, or even misunderstand. During the focus group interviews, whenever there was a discussion among the participants, the answers were given collectively by the interpreter and it was therefore hard to keep track on who said what. In my opinion, for a focus group to work ideally, the moderator/researcher should be able to understand the discussion.

I did also notice that, in the female focus groups, there were less discussions than in the male focus groups, and there were mostly one or two women answering to my questions (presumably one of the elders). It did make me curious to whether the younger women would have given other answers, but during the one-on-one interviews, where I also spoke to younger women, they gave me very similar answers. A possible explanation might be that the women had discussed these topics some time before my arrival (during or after the projects), and that the one answering gave me a representative statement based on previous discussions.

3.4.2 My role as researcher

As this study is funded by Metodistkirkens Misjonsselskap (MM), I already had a network of people meeting me and facilitating the research and my connections when I arrived in Sierra Leone. It was also natural that representatives from CELAD³ presented me to the community I was doing research in. Consequently, me being a white European, I was quickly perceived by

³ See subchapter 4.2.4. for information about CELAD

the community members as a representative for the organisation. Accordingly, it was important for me to specify that I was independent in my research and that I did not work for MM, nor did I have any relations to them beyond the study being funded by MM. Nevertheless, I do acknowledge that my connections to MM might have affected how they perceived my questions and what the informants chose to tell me. In addition, other factors such as the researcher's gender, ethnicity, age, behaviour and appearance does affect the informants and the dynamics in an interview situation (Johannessen et al., 2010, pp.137-138). Similarly, my interpretations of the data and the interview situation will be affected by my cultural understanding, education, religion and so on. It also needs to be taken into consideration that my preliminary meetings with the CELAD staff might have affected my focus areas and interpretations of the responses I got during the interviews. Acknowledging the factors mentioned above, I have tried to keep an open mind and to be as objective as possible in my interpretation and discussion of the findings.

3.5 Questions about the quality of the research

3.5.1 Ethical considerations

In all research involving human beings, there has to be taken ethical considerations. Johannessen et al. writes that ethics, broadly speaking, centres around the relationship between people. How we interact and how we affect each other raises ethical questions. When performing qualitative interviews, the interviewer needs to be aware of how sensitive topics are brought up, especially when these topics touches upon personal or intimate issues. Furthermore, the interviewer should treat the informant and the information given with respect, both during the interview and in the presentation of the research material (2004, pp. 87-88).

The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees provides ethical guidelines for research. Johannessen et al. has summarised the guidelines in three main areas of consideration: 1) The right to self-determination and autonomy: The participant in the research should have the right to be autonomous and take part voluntarily, knowing that they can withdraw at any time, with no given reason. 2) Respect for people's privacy: The participant should have the right to hold back on personal information, and to be sure that the information given is treated with confidentiality and in a manner that will not identify the informant – unless otherwise has been agreed to. 3) Considering the risk of harm: The researcher needs to make sure that the

participants are not exposed to more strain than necessary and prevent the research from causing any harm for the participants (Johannessen et al., 2004, pp. 89-90).

I had printed out letters of consent to give the interviewees on beforehand, but as there is a high percentage of illiteracy in the regions I visited, and almost none of the informants had adequate English skills, I decided to give them the information verbally and to ask explicitly for their consent to participate. The reason for this was that I didn't want to start off by potentially making them feel inferior by handing them a document they might not be able to read. All the informants in my research were verbally given information of the purpose of the interview, what I was researching, and that the study was financed by MM. They were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and they were informed that they would be anonymised and that any information that could trace back to their identity would be treated with confidentiality. The research project is reported to the Norwegian Data Protection Official for Research (NSD).

3.5.2 Reliability

The term reliability is one of the criteria for the evaluation of social research and relates to the data the research builds upon. Bryman explains that reliability is connected to the measures that are devised for the concepts one uses, such as poverty, democracy, development and so on, and whether these concepts are consistent (2008, p. 31). In quantitative research, reliability can be tested by checking if the study can be reproduced or replicated, this is called *external reliability* (Bryman, 2008, p. 376). In qualitative research, there is little purpose in testing for external reliability. First of all because the progress of assembling data is non-structured. Second, observations and analysis of qualitative data are contextual and interpreted by the researcher, thus it is nearly impossible for another scientist to duplicate the study (Johannessen et al., 2004, pp. 194-195). The reliability in qualitative research can be measured in cases where there is more than one observer, by checking whether the researchers agree on what they see and hear – this is called *internal reliability* (Bryman, 2008, p. 376). The qualitative researcher can also strengthen the reliability by presenting the reader with a thorough and transparent description of the context and the research methods, and of the whole research process (Johannessen et al., 2004, p. 195).

In this case, I was the only researcher and could therefore not discuss and compare the observations with anyone. The methods chapter accounts for why I chose to conduct qualitative

interviews and focus groups and the context of the interviews, as well as research strategy and selection of informants, in addition to my reflections on my role as a researcher and the interview situation.

3.5.3 Validity

A second criterion for evaluating the quality of social research is validity. Bryman explains that *external validity* refers to whether the findings can be generalised across social settings. Because qualitative studies tend to be built on small samples or case studies, generalisation is normally a problem for qualitative researchers, and is also not the aim of the study (2008, pp. 376-377). When conducting qualitative research, we can rather measure the *internal validity*, which refers to the degree to which the findings correctly reflects the purpose of the study and reflects the reality (Johannessen et al., 2004, p. 195).

The aim of this study was to explore how the inhabitants of Lavulema and Mamaka experienced that they were affected by MM's development work. I collected data through semi-structures interviews with inhabitants in the two villages. I do think that the findings reflect the purpose of the study, given that the informants told me about their experiences of the development projects. However, I have two concerns regarding whether the findings reflect the reality: In retrospect, I see that when conducting the interviews, I could have asked even more inquiring follow-up questions, to dig even deeper into the material. I was very careful not to impose too much, which made me scared of asking too detailed questions. Had I done that, I might have gotten more elaborate and nuanced answers, contributing to a higher degree of validity. Second, due to the short time I spent there, and the fact that I was recognised as a representative for the donor organisation (UMC), I must acknowledge the possibility that the informants might not have given me the whole picture, in fear of jeopardising future projects.

Taking these factors into consideration, I still think that the findings show at least one side of the reality, and in my mind, there are no doubts that the direct and concrete outcomes of the water well projects have brought the positive changes that the informants told me about. Furthermore, I think that I have presented the findings fair and true to the information I was given.

4 BACKGROUND

Subchapter 4.1. will provide background information about Sierra Leone, where I will give an introduction to the country's history and events that have had an impact on the present situation. Furthermore, in subchapter 4.2. and 4.3. I will give a short introduction to the two villages in which I performed the interviews – Lavulema and Mamaka. Lastly, subchapter 4.4. will provide background information about the development project “Partnership in Development” and its implementing organisations in Norway and Sierra Leone.

4.1 Sierra Leone

Knowing the historical, economical and geographical facts that has affected the country's development, or lack thereof, is important to understand the challenges and struggles Sierra Leone are facing today. The need and presence of development aid in Sierra Leone is closely connected to the country's history. In the following section, I will depict some of the events that has afflicted the country in the recent decades.



Photo: Author of the thesis. Freetown, Sierra Leone

4.1.1 Geography, people and society

Sierra Leone is a small republic on the West coast of Africa, with a population of about 7,6 million (Worldometers, 24.03.18). Islam is the major religion, with about 60 % Muslims, 10 % Christians and approximately 30 % belongs to local traditional religions. There are 16 ethnic groups in Sierra Leone, each with its own language. Their economy is based on agriculture and mining, and amongst the natural resources are diamonds, titanium ores, bauxite, iron ores, gold, chromite and salt. As the manufacturing industry is very small, most of the GDP comes from the primary industry.

The country is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 179 of 188 on the Human Development Index (2016) of the UN Development Programme, and is still recovering from its civil war (1991 – 2002), which destroyed most institutions. About 60% of the population is under the age of 25. Two thirds of the adult population are illiterates, and about 60% of the youth population are unemployed. The Ebola crisis in 2014 put a break on the economic growth of the country and pervasive corruption and underdeveloped human capital discourages foreign investment (Thuesen and Bolkan, 2018).

4.1.2 History

Sierra Leone was first known to the Europeans when the Portuguese discovered the land in the 1460's. Named after the raging mountains seen from the coast, they called it Serra Lyoa – the Lion's mountain – and was later changed to Sierra Leone. The Portuguese established trade stations, and in the 1600's Sierra Leone took part in the extensive slave trade on the African west coast. British traders settled along the coast in the 1700's, mainly in proximity to what we today know as Freetown. The founding of Sierra Leone as a country dates back to 1787, when a piece of land was bought by the British and given to 331 freed slaves from Britain. During the next century the more than 50,000 so-called *recaptives* was sent to Freetown from Jamaica, North-America and, after British government abolishes slave trade in 1807, from slave ships blocked by the British marine in American waters (thereof the name Freetown). The freed slaves had earlier been captured in different parts of Africa and did not have a common language, consequently the new culture and language *Krio* evolved. Freetown became a British Crown colony in 1808, and in 1896 Britain declares a protectorate over the entire region stretching from Liberia in the south and French Guinea in the east. The British protectorate merges with the colony of Freetown in 1951.

Sierra Leone was declared an independent state the 27th of April 1961. Siaka Stevens became their first president when Sierra Leone in 1971 became a republic. The next two decades were marked with political turmoil, Stevens and his party lived through attempts of coup d'état and assassination and several times state of emergency was declared. In 1978 APC was made the only legal political party by a constitutional change, and when Stevens in 1985 resigned, the head of Sierra Leone Military Forces, Joseph Saidu Momoh, took over as his handpicked successor. With an increasing pressure for democratisation, a new constitution allowing a multiparty system was signed in 1991, but another military coup was carried out by a group of young officers before a new election could be held. Consequently, Momoh was dismissed from his position in 1992 and Captain Valentine Strasser became Sierra Leones new head of state (Leraand, 2015).

4.1.3 The Civil war

Sierra Leones political situation was utterly complicated by a civil war, a war that grew out of a conflict that first started in their neighbour country Liberia. Sierra Leone's army came under attack from the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, and from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by former Sierra Leone army corporal Foday Sankoh. RUF had been established in Liberia, covered by the ongoing conflict there, and Foday Sankoh claimed his goal was to fight the Sierra Leonean central elites' misuse of power. RUF took control over areas in the east and the south-east of Sierra Leone and was soon to be feared for their brutal methods where civilians were subject to terrible and gruesome acts of rape, torture and amputations. There was extensive use of forced conscription, also among children.

Throughout the 1990's the battles between the RUF and the governmental forces continued. Getting control over the lucrative diamond mines became one of the core issues. RUF's primary source of income came from illegal export of diamonds, known colloquially as "blood diamonds." The trading of "blood diamonds" led to an international process (the Kimberly Process) of ensuring that raw diamonds in the trading market does not come from areas where diamond resources have led to conflicts. The battle spread to vast areas of the country, close to a million people became refugees and the humanitarian crisis in Sierra Leone became a fact.

The ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) had already in 1991 put in a peace force, the ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which in 1997 was

authorized by the UN to follow up an embargo on weapons and oil in Sierra Leone. The embargo was in year 2000 supplemented by a prohibition on the illegal diamond export.

In May 2000, the United Kingdom began a military intervention in Sierra Leone, under the code name Operation Palliser. Their primary goal was to evacuate British and other Western citizens, and secondary to better the security in Freetown and surrounding areas. The leader of RUF, Sankoh, was arrested in May 2000. In November a new peace treaty was agreed to in Abuja, Nigeria and the civil war formally ended in 2001. The civil war left a devastated country with infrastructure and most of the existing institutions in ruins, which Sierra Leone today still is in the process of rebuilding (Leraand, 2015).

4.1.4 Ebola outbreak

In March 2014 another crisis hit Sierra Leone. The Ebola virus that ravaged West Africa rapidly became the deadliest occurrence of the disease since its discovery in 1976 (BBC, 2016). The disease is highly contagious and causes symptoms like diarrhoea, fever, vomiting, severe head- and stomach aches and fatigue. Nearly 30,000 people got infected and a total of more than 11,000 people in West Africa died as a result of the Ebola infection, among them close to 4000 Sierra Leoneans (CDC, 2016a).

It is fair to assume that the development process in Sierra Leone got heavily slowed down by the Ebola epidemic. The socio-economic impact was high, as investments went down, the agricultural production declined and limitations on movement, goods and services decreased cross-border trading. The healthcare system was also affected, a healthcare system that already was struggling with lack of clean water and medical supplies. As healthcare workers caring for Ebola victims were among those with the highest risk of contracting the disease, an estimate of 7% of Sierra Leone's healthcare workers were lost in the epidemic. This had an indirect impact on healthcare services in the aftermath of the epidemic, as the reduced access to healthcare led to setbacks in the treatment of other common diseases like HIV, tuberculosis and malaria. Furthermore, the children were heavily affected. An estimate of 17,300 West-African children became orphaned because of Ebola, and as all the schools were closed for nearly a year, they lost many hours of education. In addition, the vaccination routines had to pause when funding and logistics previously dedicated to vaccination campaigns were redirected towards fighting the epidemic (CDC, 2016b).

4.1.5 Today's political situation in Sierra Leone

After the civil war, there has been an ongoing work with reconstructing and reconciliation in the country. The political climate is still in turmoil, and the two major parties, Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and All People's Party (APC) have dominated the politics ever since Sierra Leone gained independence. Many citizens are dissatisfied with the fact that there is little improvement in people's life conditions, and Sierra Leone remains one of the world's poorest countries. Corruption is still highly present, both in the politics and in the legal system (FN-Sambandet, 2016). In their recent presidential election in April 2018, Julius Maada Bio of the opposition party SLPP won the elections, barely beating the APP candidate Samura Kamara. Bio, who is a former soldier and took part in the military coup during the country's civil war in 1992, has opposed to criticism of violating human rights during military rule by claiming "collective responsibility" for any violations. President Bio is now criticising the former government for its close ties with Chins and has pledged to reunite the country's divisions and invest to strengthen the education system (BBC, 2018).

4.2 Partnership in Development

The development projects researched in this study is part of the Partnership in Development (PID) programme. The initiative came from Norsk Misjons Bistandsnemnd (BN, which later changed the name to Digni) in 2002, and the philosophy of the programme was

- Keeping the main focus of all development work on a local level in the civil society (congregation), and that the work should contribute to strengthening the civil society and developing democratic organisations.
- That the responsibility for planning, implementation and evaluation of development projects lies with the local collaboration partner.
- To simplify the application process and reporting at all levels, from the local civil society through the local/national partner and up to BN (now Digni) and NORAD.
- To improve the quality of the development work done by churches and Christian organisations with increased focus on permanent changes in the local community.

(Metodistkirkens Misjonsselskap, 2018)

A training manual was developed by the Partnership in Development programme in 2015. The training manual provides detailed information about goals and objectives for the development project and for the training given to the local community members, considerations in project

planning and implementation (gender, vulnerability, children, physical challenges, environment), and information about gender, sustainability and diseases and how to prevent and treat them.

The objectives of the training manual are as follows:

- To improve community members knowledge and understanding of partnership in community development initiatives
- To empower community members with skills and abilities to effectively and efficiently execute community development activities
- To encourage positive community development attitudes
- To establish the model of partnership in development with local communities challenged with issues of poverty
- To promote uniformity in training approaches in community development activities around Africa

(Partnership in Development training manual, 2015, p. 29)

4.2.1 Metodistkirkens Misjonsselskap

Metodistkirkens Misjonsselskap (MM) is one of Digni's member organisations. MM operates the national and international mission work of the Methodist church. MM was the only one of Digni's organisations that was willing to start up the PID programme. Their first collaboration was with the Methodist church in Angola, and a program with the abbreviation PRODESSA was started in 2004. The project expanded to Liberia in 2006, Zimbabwe in 2010, and finally to the CELAD project Sierra Leone in 2013 (Metodistkirkens Misjonsselskap, 2018).

4.2.2 Digni

Digni was established in 1983, at the time called Norsk Misjons Bistandsnemnd. The name was changed to "Digni" in 2011, deriving from the Latin word *Dignitas* which means dignity. Digni consists of 20 Norwegian Christian organisations that works against poverty and for dignified lives. The organization seeks to strengthen the rights of vulnerable and marginalised peoples, and to give them the opportunity to develop and make use of their resources. Digni works strategically with challenging the governments and power in the countries in which they work and is funded yearly with 186 million Norwegian NOK by NORAD (Digni, 2018).

4.2.3 The United Methodist Church in Sierra Leone

Originated in the Shrebro country, founded by the American Missionaries of the New York/Anti-slavery Society in 1842 (then called the Mendi Mission), the United Methodist Church is today the fastest growing protestant church in Sierra Leone. With a member mass of above 220,000 Sierra Leoneans, the UMC covers all fourteen political districts of the country. The UMC supports community development activities with a special focus on women, youth and child welfare, and has thus an essential role in Sierra Leones socio-economic growth. The church has established more than schools countrywide, in addition to establishing health care centres and hospitals, and was a leading assistance to the government in fighting the Ebola outbreak (PID training manual, 2015, p. 26).

The PID programme is first and foremost intended for communities where there are local UMC congregations. The UMC provides an organisational structure that facilitates the work of implementing a development project. However, the PID training manual also states that communities that may not have UMC congregations but where there are established needs may also be targeted (PID, 2015, p. 19).

4.2.4 CELAD – Community Empowerment for Livelihood and Development

Partnership in Development's development program in Sierra Leone carries the abbreviation CELAD, Community Empowerment for Livelihood and Development. The programme is a result of the partnership between MM and the Methodist church of Sierra Leone (United Methodist Church, UMC), and as I learned at a CELAD conference I participated at in Bo, Sierra Leone (20.11.17) they have recently entered into a second five-year period of financial support from NORAD (through Digni).

The prioritised target groups of CELAD are the most vulnerable youths, as well as women and children who lives in poor farming societies in the rural districts. The primary focus of the programme is

- Education and leadership
- Health, including water and sanitary conditions
- Income generating projects
- Agriculture
- Infrastructure

(Metodistkirkens Misjonsselskap, 2018)

As UMC is the international term for the Methodist church, I used this term when interviewing the informants, and not MM. In the presentation of the findings, the term UMC will be used when talking about the Methodist organisation as a partner, because this is what was known to the participants.

4.2.5 Construction and excavation of the water well

The receiving partners are contributing with unskilled labour in the process of constructing the water well. Participation is an important aspect in the PID programme, giving the community ownership to the relevant project. To give some insight to what the work consists of, this subchapter presents some sections from a CELAD document describing the process of constructing the water wells:

The community identifies the location and size of the water well. Next, the community shall identify a local technician within the chiefdom who can manually dig the well using simple implements like pick axe, shovel, hoe, buckets, and a simple pulley system which is used to facilitate the removal of dirt from the pit when digging. The community provides with unskilled labour to assist with the digging.

Technically, the digging captures a depth where the water table is known as the aquifer. The depth ranges between 10 to 20 metres based on the topography of the land. When the water table is reached the technician drains it using the pulley until it is cleaned for drinking. For sustainability of the well, the internal wall has to be lined using materials such as iron rods, binding wires, cement, granite stones and sand. Asphalt is mixed and poured into the mould. This is done to avoid land slide or collapse of the internal wall after some period of time. This concrete is left to be strong for approximately a week, after which the mould is removed. This process is repeated until it reaches the required height of the well. When completed, a hand pump machine known as India Mark -11(two) is procured and fixed to the well by the technician.

A water quality technician is brought to carry out water quality testing to ascertain whether the water is drinkable or can be used for other domestic purposes (Kamanda, 2018).



Photo: Author of the thesis. Community members in Mamaka demonstrating how the well works

How the well works

A concrete lid is constructed to cover the well which has a hole in the middle of it. The hand pump kit has a cylinder which is immersed in the bottom of the water through the hole. In the cylinder there is a valve and a seal. This is connected to a pipe that is linked to a small water reservoir and a connecting rod. This rod is also linked up with a handle that is pushed up and down. During the up and down movement of the handle it exerts pressure on the valve which causes the water to go through the pipe in the small reservoir and then the mouth of the pump thus collection of water for your use. At any stage of the construction, the community is involved. A maintenance committee is elected by the community comprising of five people. They will take care of the management of the well. At the end of it all the well is commissioned and handed over to the community for community use (Kamanda, 2018).

5 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

In this chapter, you will find a presentation of the findings from the data collection. Subchapter 5.2. gives the findings from Lavulema community and the findings from Mamaka community will be given in subchapter 5.3. I have organised the presentation according to the topics from my research questions.

The starting point of this study was to find out how the local inhabitants in the villages Lavulema and Mamaka experienced to be affected by a development project in their communities. The specific projects I focused on was the building of a water well, one in each of the villages. I was interested in finding out how the community members experienced the development project in terms of democracy, community empowerment, poverty, and lastly, I wanted to find out how the locals experienced the partnership with MM in the implementation and performance of the projects.

A presentation of the results from the interviews will be given in this chapter. The findings will be presented thematically, according to the topics in my research questions: Democracy, gender equity, poverty, community empowerment and experiences of partnership. I will also present the findings from each village (respectively Lavulema and Mamaka) separately and subsequently compare data from the two villages in the analysis chapter. I will connect quotes from the informants to the presentation of the findings, because I wish to display their subjective opinions and perspectives.

As I did not speak either Mende or Temne, which is the common language on the two villages I visited, and few of the locals spoke English, I used an interpreter both in Lavulema and in Mamaka. Sometimes the interpreter would answer with the informant's voice, with a first-person narrative, sometimes he would refer to what the informant was saying, in a third-person narrative. I will not change this in the presentation of the findings and the quotations will therefore vary between a first- and third-person narrative. I've given the informants names to make the presentation more vivid, viz. the informants' names in this presentation are not their real names.

5.1 The findings from Lavulema community

Lavulema is a small community in the Moyamba district, with approximately 300 inhabitants. The work with the water pump started in May 2013 and was finished in August 2013.

When I first arrived in Lavulema, they were already waiting for me outside of the primary school and chairs were set up in a circle under a large tree that provided some shade and protection from the heating sun. Before I could begin my interviews, there was to be held a community meeting. Little by little, people started to gather and sit down, both men and women from all age groups, as well as children. It was a Monday and a school day, and a lot of the pupils turned up in the background, curious about my visit, but they were soon told to get back to their classrooms.

The community meeting was initiated with a prayer, first a Muslim prayer and secondly a Christian prayer. It looked like all the people present participated in both prayers. Next, Andrew Momoh from the CELAD staff introduced me and my project and asked the town chief permission for me to perform my interviews. Permission was granted, and I told them about myself, my master thesis, who I wanted to talk to and what I was interested in learning about. Despite English being the official language in Sierra Leone, only a minority speak the language adequately and the common language in Lavulema is Mende (which is also the tribe in this area). Therefore, the whole meeting was interpreted by the primary school headmaster Mr. Lamin Smart, who would also serve as my interpreter during the interviews. Since there were already many people gathered there, they asked if I would perform a focus group interview first, and as I was new to the people, location and situation I agreed because I did not want to come across as too interfering. They asked me if I wanted to begin with men or women, and they reacted with amusement when I chose to talk to the women first. A chair was set up to serve as a table for me, and a group of eight women ranging from age 20 to 55 sat down in front of me, in addition to the interpreter. All in all, I interviewed two men and two women individually, in addition to two focus group interviews – one with only women and one with only men.

All the interviews were performed under the very same tree where the community meeting was held, and because this was just next to the primary school, there seemed like there was no chance of privacy. There were at all times a small audience of both adults and children, and after considering whether I should ask for privacy or not, I chose not to, because I wanted to gain

trust and get a positive relationship with the people. I was told that the water well was built in connection to the school, and after I had done the interviews, they showed me the water well and gave me a demonstration of how it worked.

I initiated all the interviews by informing the participants about the implications of being interviewed; that all identifying information about individuals would be anonymized, and that they at any time could withdraw with no reason given.



Photo: Author of the thesis. Picture taken during the prayer initiating the community meeting.

5.1.1 Initiating the water well project – what are their experiences in terms of democracy?

I was interested in finding out if they experienced that the process had taken place in a democratic and respectful manner, both within the community but also in relation to the CELAD staff from UMC. I started by simply asking them what they knew about the water well project and how it came about.

All the participants seemed well informed about the initiation process and what organisation made the project a reality. All the informants in Lavulema pointed out Mr. Lavali, the UMC district superintendent at the time, as a central person in the initiation of the water well project. They described how they suffered from lack of safe drinking water, and how their children and

elders consequently got diseases like cholera, diarrhoea and dysentery. During a community meeting Mr. Lavali told the people of Lavulema about the opportunity to get funding from the UMC to build a water well. They were already acquainted with the PID programme, as the primary school was a result of a CELAD project through the PID development programme, and the water well was to be built in connection to the school, as described here:

We got this water well through district superintendent Mr. Lavali. After they built the school there was no water well. So, we called upon him to come to our aid, so we can get water well. So, he told us to write a letter to the UMC mission and development so that they can help us. So, we wrote a letter to the mission. [Ruth]

I was also told that they were asked to form a committee of seven people that would lead and be the local supervisors of the project. When I asked the focus group the same question, they elaborated the answer a bit:

We got to know about this project when there was a meeting here. The committee held a meeting, in which they invited the district superintendent, Mr. Lavali. In the meeting we told him that the school has no water well. And the children are getting sick. They have these diseases, cholera and so on. So, please Mr. Lavali, help us to get a water well in this compound. [...] He directed us to write a note, a letter of interest to mission and development, to UMC mission and development, through Mr. Lavali who got this chance to come here. So, after writing the letter, a few months later people came to the community and asked us: “were you the people who wrote this letter?”. We said, “yes”. Later they returned, they came back, and asked us to elect a seven-man⁴ committee who man this work. So, the community nominated and elected seven members. [Woman from focus group]

Some of the informants used this as an opportunity to express their gratitude towards the UMC:

⁴ From talking to representatives at the CELAD office, and from the interviews, I learned that the “seven-man committee” (PMC) should comprise of at least three women. Still, most of the informants referred to it as “seven-man”, instead of “seven people”. It is fair to assume that “man” is a common way to refer to people, regardless of sex, as a heredity from the time when there was less focus on the rhetoric of gender equality.

We were suffering from unsafe drinking water, at first. During the dries, they used to walk 3 miles to get drinking water. Unsafe drinking water. When the water was filthy, most times the children got dysentery, diarrhoea and cholera. And the hospital is very distant place from here. So, when all of this was happening, we cried to these people, to UMC development and development mission. So, we are very happy, because [...] now we are getting safe drinking water and they are not getting that kind of sickness again. So, we are very much happy for what you people have given to us. We say thank you very much, and God bless you all. [Woman from focus group]

To find out what they knew about how the decision process went on I asked if they knew who decided to apply for this specific water well project. They all agreed that no one person took the decision, but the whole community:

We, the community thought it fit that we want safe drinking water. because, during the dry season we do not get safe drinking water. So, the community met and decided that we should call Mr. Lavali to come and help us to get safe drinking water. Because our children were getting sick during the dry season. And even the elder people. [Violet]

As I had been told that the communities had to form a Project Management Committee (PMC), I was curious to find out how the election process had taken place and asked them what they knew about that. My goal was to find out if there had been a democratic process, but the informants seemed to have various understandings of what my question meant. Some of them told me that the elected members were chosen because of their trustworthiness and engagement in the community. The men in the focus group had a discussion before they told me that “These seven people, they were selected because they can take their work very serious. So that was how the seven-man committee was formed” [Men from focus group]. Another informant from the women’s focus group told me that the members were nominated and elected by the community: “The 7 men were elected by the community. Themselves. They were nominated and elected” [Woman from focus group].

On a further question if both genders could be elected, the interpreter answers himself: “Both men and women, comprised of both men and women. Three women and four men.” I also asked one informant if she knew about any preconditions related to who could be elected for the PMC. She was clear to inform that the elected members needed to be engaged and trusted within the

community: “Somebody who was careless cannot be elected, if you are careless. Somebody careless they cannot elect you. That person would not be trusted. Careless people. We could not take careless people” [Ruth].

5.1.2 What are their experiences in terms of community empowerment? Learning and participating in the water well project

A part of the CELAD programme is to give the local project partners training in order to empower community members with skills and abilities to effectively execute community development activities and to encourage positive community development attitudes. I was interested in finding out what kind of training they had gotten, and their experiences of the training. To find out what they knew about the training, I asked them what kind of training they had been given. Sanitation, and how to keep clean was a part of their training. The women had learned that they were all responsible to contribute with a small amount of money if the well was damaged, the men had gotten training in how to maintain and eventually repair the tap. One of the women from the focus group told me this:

There are a seven-man committee elected before the project could start. So those that are in the committee comprise of a secretary, a co-ordinator, a storekeeper, the treasurer and advisors. Two advisors. So, they train us how to treat the work. And even entering that area where the water well is, we have to take off our shoes. Then we are given soap to wash our hands. Before using the toilet, before using the water well. They train us that when the water well is faulty, we have to come together to contribute a small {??} to contribute some money to repair it. And today, in fact, the money is there. To repair it. It has a fault, in the past they have not contributed money to pay that man. [Woman from focus group]

The men were trained in how to maintain the tap, and how to repair it if it broke: “According to him, he said. They are trained. When we got this tap, we are trained. To maintenance the tap” [Male, from focus group]. Another informant, Samuel, told me that before they got the training, they usually had to find a repairman in Taiama, a larger village a few miles from Lavulema. Now that they have gotten the training, the locals know how to fix the tap themselves. “Whenever those people came here they give us that pump, they use a man here go to Taiama. Then they learned them. In case that if at all that tap, pump spoiled, there are people here to maintenance it” [Samuel]. Another informant said that some of the members had gotten training

in how to construct the water well, and that the knowledge was then passed on to other participants in the project.

I also asked the men's focus group more specifically about whether they had gotten any training related to gender roles and perspectives on gender. One of the men explained that they got educated about sanitation and how to take care of the women and children:

He said that they got the training yeah. They were trained about the gender roles yeah. And he went on saying that, in fact they were trained in how to go about taking care of the little children, taking care of their wives. [Male from focus group]

Since community empowerment is one of CELADS goals, I saw it important to explore the informants' experience of the water well project and asked them if they thought their community had gained anything from the project. Apart from the obvious changes like less diseases due to access to clean water, both men and women showed gratitude of being entrusted with this kind of work and expressed that it has given them a sense of pride and respect:

[W]ith this project, they have been trained how to repair the tap. They say that when this responsibility is given to you, that shows that you are very much respectful. And this project has made a way for them to know so many areas of Sierra Leone. [...] He says that where he wasn't before, he has gone there. That is one opportunity for them. [Men from focus group]

The men from the focus group did also express their gratitude to the UMC for bringing the possibilities for building the water well to their community. The women from the focus group expressed gratitude for being given the kind of responsibility this project had brought:

They said, the work has changed them because the workers entrusted responsibility in their hand, they have given them school, rehabilitated the school, the water well is functioning fine. The change in the community about diseases has been a big change in the community. They don't get those diseases now, like cholera and dysentery, and the possibility, that you trusted them, in their hands, to man a kind of a project like this. They are happy. [Woman from focus group]

Another of CELADS training goals is to nurture a positive attitude towards community development. I found that getting the whole community engaged in the project might not have been without obstacles, and took some persuasion in the beginning:

It was very hard to get all the women and all the men together the first day. It was only after one or two days, that people start co-operating. That first day, when the work started, it was very difficult to get all the people together. It was only after two days that people advised them that this is very efficient to you people, so please do it together as a team. [Women from focus group]

I followed up this answer by asking whether their society had changed after they got the water well, and all the women present applauded and said that they are all co-operating now.

In the implementation of CELAD'S projects, everyone in the community is expected to participate, both men, women and children. Getting the people of the community to contribute with local materials and human resources was an important part of ensuring co-operation and participation from the locals and is also meant to give the local people ownership to the project. I asked the informants what their task in the project was, and what was the role of the community:

We are fetching stones. Building stones. Sand. Sticks. Bush sticks. when needed. [...] When the workers are at the sight, they prepare food. They can tell the other women to fetch water. Prepare food for the workers and telling the women to fetch water. [Ruth]

I also asked the informants what they thought about the fact that they were asked to contribute with local materials and work. John answered "Just fine, because that brings development. When you work as a team, with partners, it brings development. We are happy."

Interestingly, in this village, the children had not participated in the project. When I asked whether the children had been affected in any way, they told me no, because they were going to school: "They were not allowed to participate at all. 'Cause they were learning" [Ruth]. I was later told, by one of the Norwegian project partners, that Plan International⁵ had spent time

⁵ Plan International is a global aid agency that works for promoting and fulfilling children's rights (<https://plan-international.org/>)

in this particular village at an earlier point of time and that they had taught the locals about the negative sides of child labour. As a result, no children were participating in the water well project in Lavulema.

5.1.3 Poverty reduction as enhancing the basic freedoms of the people

CELAD targets communities which struggles with poverty, and reducing poverty is not just about increasing people's incomes. Increasing people's quality of life by reducing sicknesses, infant death and giving children opportunity to go to school are important means in Sen's understanding of poverty reduction. Accordingly, to find out what kind of impact, if any, the project had had on their daily lives, and on their community, I asked if the project had changed the children's possibilities to go to school. It was clear that they were very happy that the children were healthier, and that one of the positive effects was that more people sent their kids to school, since the water well is built in connection to the school.

Now the possibilities will be good, because, previously there was no good water to drink. But because there is now good drinking water, people have decided to let their children go to school. And there are a lot of children now, in fact you can see them around. You see. As compared to the past years. In fact, with that project, we are trained about hygiene, sanitation. How to clean the compound, how to take care of the children, how to take care of the classroom, the toilets. Yes. So, the projects have brought a lot of benefits for the community and for the school as well.
[Male from focus group]

An indirect effect of the building of the well was that the children got healthier and more able to participate in the education. In addition, they did not have to spend time going to fetch water and could go to school instead.

When we are getting water from the streams, children used to get cholera, dysentery, diarrhoea and the likes. Presently we have got safe drinking water, children are not getting sick. [Ruth]

John told me that not only the children benefitted from the water well, but the whole community:

We gained a lot, a lot, a lot. Apart from sanitation, the children are benefitting from this same project. Due to this one, children have got benefit, a lot of gain. Even the community, both men and women, children are not getting sick again. [John]

5.1.4 Experiences of partnership

Another of MM's visions is to move away from the donor/receiver rhetoric and towards a partnership-oriented view on development aid. Therefore, I sought to explore the locals' experience of partnership with CELAD/MM. At first, I asked the informants what the word partnership meant to them. I found that the informants understood partnership as positive, and necessary to grow and develop.

One of the women from the focus group told me this: "Partnership is very good thing, because partnership is unity, love, partnership is good. Anybody cannot stand alone. But with two or three people you work together. And when you work together is good." Samuel thought of partnership as a positive force and a source for mutual learning: "It's good. By sharing ideas, we teach each other." A number of the informants were thinking of partnership as a specific phenomenon connected to the development project, as Ruth put it: "Partnership means development. Partners develops people. One person cannot {??} alone. It is better to have a partner, so they can work unanimously, as a team." John and Violet told me that partnership has brought development to their community, which they saw as a positive force. When asking the male focus group about partnership, this was confirmed:

What [he] is trying to say, that partnership is good for the community. Because no one stands alone. It is only when you do work with a partner, then you can get some amount of development. [...] In fact, they are extending so many thanks to you, and they are hoping that the relationship will continue. Yes. (background applause). [Male from focus group]

Further, to hear their opinions on how they experienced the partnership between MM and their community, I asked them if they thought the project had been executed in a way that conferred with their idea of partnership. The informants all agreed that the relationship between MM and the community was cordial and that the community was being respected in the process, as Ruth put it: "The work went on smoothly, we were respected." John said that "there was no other way we should have done it. It went on smoothly. We can only ask for any other project

development. Then think of us.” Violet emphasised how she experienced the relationship between the UMC and the community: “Amicably, no disturbance no grumble. Cordial relationship between the UMC and the community.”

To give them the opportunity to express any critiques towards the project and the way it was executed, I asked if it was anything they meant should have, or could have been done in another way, or better. Again, the answers were overwhelmingly positive:

There’s no other way the work could have been done. It happened normally. But she’s appealing now, that the teachers used to come from distant villages, distant villages to school every morning. So, if any other projects were coming, you people should think about that one. Yeah. Teachers come from distant villages every morning to school. [Violet]

Ruth confirmed that they had no thoughts about the project to be done in a different manner: “There was no different way. They did it in the way we like it,” while the men from the focus group added that they were very happy about the way the project was executed: “According to them everything was done correct. And they are really happy about it.”

5.2 Findings from Mamaka community

Mamaka community in Tonkolili district has approximately 2500 inhabitants. The water well project was carried out in 2014. I arrived in Mamaka community mid-day, and when I got there they had been waiting for me a couple of hours already. I got a very warm welcome by the interpreter, who also was head teacher at the primary school in the neighbour community. A table and some chairs and benches were set up on a small concrete platform with a roof to provide some shade. A few people were hanging around, mostly men, and a few women and curious children showed up to see what was going on. It was clearly exciting to have a stranger visiting, some of them looked very serious and others were giggling when I smiled at them. Before we began the interviews, they showed me the water pump, which was very close to where we sat, and demonstrated how it worked.

All the interviews were performed on this concrete platform, in what I was told was the centre of the community. During the interviews, some people would sit in the background listening, and some was coming and going. I considered asking for privacy during the interviews, but it

was difficult due to the set up and I wanted to make them feel like this was an open and including process, and in the end, I chose not to. I initiated all the interviews by informing the participants about the implications of being interviewed; that all identifying information about individuals would be anonymised, and that they at any time could withdraw with no reason given. As there was no community meeting in Mamaka to present me and my task, I told the informants about myself and my thesis, and what I was interested in finding out before I started asking questions.



Photo: Author of the thesis. Sign showing that UMC is the implementor of the water well project in Mamaka

5.2.1 Initiating the water well project – what are their experiences in terms of democracy?

When I asked what the informants knew about the project, and how it was initiated, they all seemed well informed about the process. Hussain told me that “this project came here as a result of the church that we have here. Through UMC. It is their own favour that brought this project here. It is only UMC that got this project here.” He also told me that this project was the best one of all the development projects they had had in the community. UMC is not the only

organisation that has contributed to development in Mamaka, but according to Hussain, UMC follows through and collaborates with the community in a good manner:

They are very much happy to see you to people whom you sent to come and assist us, with the people that they elected here the PMC project management committee, they did a very good job. They did exactly what they are expected to do. [Hussain]

Further, Hussain told me that their community sometimes had people came to visit, which they were annoyed by. He did not say in plain words who those people were, but I interpreted it to be people from other organisations than UMC, because in the next part he referred to the people sent by the UMC and how the community were happy with the way they worked:

Sometimes they send people to go and do some activities in certain areas but if it concerns to money sometimes the projects will not continue. Sometimes when they come to visit – when they visit sometimes in the communities they will always be annoyed with certain people that are in the communities. [Hussain]

Next, he said that that the PID programme, brought by the UMC were better than any other project they had participated in before:

But the people whom they sent to come and implement this project here, they did exactly what is expected of them. So, they are praying to God so that God will provide more and more for them. As he said earlier on, we are getting some projects, but this is the best one of all the projects we have been getting. [Hussain]

Both the male and the female focus groups confirmed my impression that the community was well informed and that the project was initiated and carried out by the community members themselves:

This project came here as a result of a letter we sent to UMC through CELAD. Because of lack of water. The distance to go for water is very far from here. Sometimes they are afraid to send their children far off to go and fetch water. So, when they heard about this project, they all sat together and said let's write to these people. And made the request. The whole town participated. Everyone was happy. {??} contribution by {??} the local materials. Even the sand, the stones. Those big stones. They even provide labour. For work. sometimes, they even made contribution

preparing food for the workers. When the time for fetching water comes. They even contributed gratefully. And they took good parts {??} of this project. This is how they understood about the project. [Woman from focus group]

The men from the focus group confirmed the view of the women, emphasising how the community people took part in the decision-making process and the execution of the project:

He said, they got the project through Norway. We are very much happy about the project that you brought to us here. When they come with project, it was give and take. We decided that we are going to provide the local materials. We, the community people. And we even did that. And the project went on successfully. If you are here today and you say you want to know our experiences about this project, this is how we went through the project. [Men from focus group]

I was interested in finding out if the whole community had participated in the decision process before implementing the project, so I asked them who decided to apply for a water well. The informants agreed that the entire community had decided to build a water well, and the location of it, as Daisy put it: “The entire community decided that they want a water well. It is the entire community that said that they want a water well.” Yaema confirmed Daisy’s answer: “[The] entire community and all the people that were involved were consulted.”

5.2.2 Community empowerment: learning and participating in the water well project

One of UMC Norway and CELADs visions is that the project contributes to empowering the communities by expecting them to participate in both the decision process and the carrying out of the project. The communities are supposed to be given certain conditions, like providing local materials and human resources. When I asked the informants what the role of the community was, I was told by Yousuf that “It was the youths that provided the labour, in excavation.” However, the other informants told me that the rest of the community had contributed with performing various tasks; they had provided local materials like sand and stones, and labour, as Daisy told me: “They provide the labour. Providing local materials like stones, sticks. Yes. They even provided storage facilities. And accommodation for the workers.” Yaema described how the community members participated in the project:

[T]hey provided the labour. Then, the men brought the big stones that the women cannot bring into the town. Then sometimes they provide water for the workers. Even provide food.

Contribute. In preparing food. For the workers. Sometimes they even provide cigarettes as an incentive for the workers. [Yaema]

When talking to the female focus group, they emphasized that they were grateful to contribute:

Even the sand, the stones. Those big stones. They even provide labour. For work. sometimes, they even made contribution preparing food for the workers. When the time for fetching water comes. They even contributed gratefully. And they took good parts {??} of this project. This is how they understood about the project. [Woman from focus group]

Training the community members in connection to the projects is a part of empowering the community. I was curious to know what kind of training they had gotten, and what they thought about getting the training. Not everyone had gotten any training, but Yaema told me that those who had gotten the training had passed on what they had been told:

Those who went to the training, when they came, they told her that this water well project is not a single man project. It is a project for the entire community. It is a project for both the two religions that are here. It is for both Muslims and Christians. Not only for the UMC mission. So, when they came and told her, she was very happy. [Yaema]

Some of the informants could not remember exactly what kind of training they had gotten but agreed that they had been asked to contribute [with a small fee of money] to the maintenance of the water well, in addition to taking part in the project. The men from the focus group told me that they had gotten training in well maintenance, taking care of materials and how to mobilise the community:

They were trained in well maintenance. Yes. They were also trained to take care of the material that were brought. The storage facility is one. And we should also mobilise the community {??} the youths, in doing the work. these are some of the trainings we did get. Before the commence of the project. [Men from focus group]

I was also curious to find out whether they had learned anything from the water well project. Hussain told me that they had learnt how to mobilise the community to co-operate when projects like this was operating:

One of the example is that they now know how to mobilise the whole {???) in project activities. That if the committee is {???) and a single project is good for the community, they should know how to handle that situation. By adding in people who can go to work today the tomorrow the rest go to their work, then the other group again coming. [Hussain]

The men from the focus group had a positive experience with men and women working together as a team, and thought a project to become more successful if everyone participated in the whole process:

From this project we learned that whenever there are men and women in a project it will always succeed. Because, one, they will go all out and tell their companions that now let's go out and do {???) as a team {???) they will {???) and they will comprise, and they will follow, and they will do that. That's how we did here when this project become successful. [Men from focus group]

The women from the focus group also brought up the fact that women were included on the projects, and they also told me that they now had someone within the community who had training in maintaining and repairing the water well:

Whenever there is a work or there is a project, women are not left behind. That's one. They also trained another people in well maintenance. There are people here that can do it. Apart from going to Mile 91⁶ or any other area. We got that {???) here. [Women from focus group]

A part of community empowerment is empowering women. According to the projects' training manual, they should be given training in gender issues, and be encouraged to involve all members of the community – both men and women. I therefore asked the informants if they had gotten any training regarding gender roles and gender equality, and what they thought about that. I also asked some of the informants whether the project had had any effects on the relationship between men and women. Most of the informants were focused on how involving women in a project would make it become more successful and efficient, and the women were happy not to be left behind any more. I also got the impression that they had embraced this way

⁶ Mile 91 is a larger village approximately 7 miles from Mamaka

of working and used the model of forming a PMC comprising of both men and women in following projects as well. Here is an extract of my conversation with Hussain:

Me: Do you think this project has had any effect on the relationship between men and women?
(background applause)

Hussain: They are very much happy because of this, the committee we did form. In terms of the relationship. Because it is gender equality. In the community the committee, seven members were elected. Three women, four men. So, we are very much happy about that. Meaning, women are now given roles in the community.

Me: And this is new from before?

Interpreter: Yes.

Hussain: Meaning, it is an ongoing process. Before the water well, such committees we have not. We have not in our communities. Before the commencement of the project, a committee like this was formed. And that committee is now extending, and it is an ongoing process. Whenever a project is brought here, women and men are brought together to form a committee.

Me: What do you think about that?

Hussain: They are now happy, because wherever there should be a woman, there should always be a man. Sometimes women tell their comrades. they tell their colleagues that today we are supposed to do some work. whenever a woman goes around and informs her colleagues, they will do that with the single of an eye. More than a man did it.

Me: So, it's easier for a woman to give instructions to another woman than for a man?

Interpreter: Exactly.

Hussain: The female. If the female, is asked to call her colleagues, that message will go quicker and faster than with the males.

Yaema was very happy about the fact that women were now being included and given important roles in projects such as the building of the water well:

“The project created very important impact on the lives of the people in the community. Because the women were involved in the community, in the PMC. [...] She is very much happy about that”

Yousuf told me that this way of including women in the process was new to their community, and in his opinion, it was a premise for the project to succeed:

“Now, whenever you have {anything now?} if there are no women, if it’s a project, then that would not succeed.”

5.2.3 Poverty reduction as enhancing the basic freedoms of the people

In the light of Sen’s perspective on poverty as capability deprivation, giving people access to clean water reduces sickness and increases the capabilities. It also reduces the time spent on fetching water and gives more children the opportunity to go to school.

When I asked what the informants and their community had gained from the project, the main topics they brought up were time and health, as described here:

Time. In fact, they cannot go far from the town to get water. Sicknesses. Illnesses like cholera and diarrhoea are no more affecting this community. The children are no longer go to school late. Yes. {???} water. They can easily access this water at any times. [Women from focus group]

Because they now have the water well in proximity to their whereabouts, they did no longer need to walk miles to get water. Especially the school children benefitted from this because they do not longer come late for school. In addition, the water they got from the stream was not clean, and they would now have a healthier life due to the water well:

There are no more illnesses. No more diseases like before. That’s one. Now the children are no longer late to go to school. Because they use to be late, they used to go to school late whenever they ask them to go for water because of the distance. Then even the water is more safe. It’s safe for drinking. Than any other water around here. We are very much happy about that. [Men from focus group]

5.2.4 Experiences of partnership

To explore how they perceived the partnership with UMC/CELAD, I started by asking the informants what the term partnership meant to them. The informants were unanimously agreeing that partnership equals unity, and that partnership is sometimes essential for a project to become successful or at least more efficient, as Daisy said: “It brings unity and development. Partnership.” Another informant underlined the partnership between men and women in a project, for it to be efficient:

Now he is saying that when you say partnership it means one unity. Sometimes it helps a project to become successful. Where you bring in a woman and a man, whenever you put them together, you say let's come together and do this thing, that project will go faster. [Hussain]

The male focus group did also agree that partnership is essential for a successful project: "It brings unity. That's what they know. Unity. And it makes a project become successful." They were all overwhelmingly positive to the relationship between the UMC and their community, and their answers to my question on whether they perceived the partnership between their community and the UMC as in line with their views on partnership can be summed up in one word: "Cordial."

I did ask if there were anything they wish had been done differently or better, and here they brought up two issues: The work began, in their opinion, a month too early, and consequently the well was not dug deep enough, as said by Yaema:

There is nothing about this. Everything went on smoothly. The only and only problem there is the project was started very early. We expected that it started in March. But it started in February. But we are very much happy about that. [Yaema]

The other issue was that one well is not enough for an entire community comprising of over 2000 inhabitants:

[W]hat the project brought here is well and good. But she is only asking for another additional water well. Because this one is not enough. That's the only things she can say. [Daisy]

In addition to Daisy's request for another water well, Hussain told me that the project was initiated too early, and as a consequence, the well was dry for some time during the year:

Yes, there is one thing. The project is brought here before the time. It's brought before time. The project started in February and ended in April. It should have been started in March, April and May. Because the water would have been down in March. But the project started in February when the water was still up. Normally it will not serve the community completely throughout the year. [...] And at the same time, it is only single, it is only one. If you look at the community, this one, it cannot serve the entire community throughout the year. [Hussain]

5.3 Reflections after the interviews

After performing almost all the interviews, it hit me that the answers they gave me when I asked about their understanding of the term partnership were very much alike, and that they connected the term to the CELAD project. In Lavulema, several of the informants thought of partnership as something that brought development. In Mamaka, the informants emphasised how partnership was essential in making a project become successful. Maybe they thought I wanted to get answers about the project, but I initially asked them “what does the word partnership mean to *you*?” Either the interpreter formulated the question differently, or they thought I sought answers to what they think about partnership in terms of this particular partnership with CELAD, or they had no concept like this before the project began. I tried asking the interpreter in Mamaka about this when we had a conversation after finishing the interviews, but I do not think I was able to explain where I wanted to go with my question and did not get any clear answer.

Another interesting matter is that many of the informants used the interview situation as an opportunity to plead for the approval and funding for new projects. Especially in Lavulema, where I had been introduced by UMC representatives during a community meeting, the informants were eager to express their gratitude to me and to ask for more projects to come. It is fair to assume that I was looked at as a representative from UMC, and this may have affected how they perceived my questions and how they chose to answer.

I also made the observation that there were some gender differences during the focus group interviews: The men were more likely to discuss in focus groups, and when giving the answers, several of the men in the group spoke. On the contrary, in the women’s focus groups it was mostly one woman who gave the final answer, if they had a discussion at all, and in the cases where several women spoke, the elder(s) would always answer first.

6 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings from the data collection in Lavulema and Mamaka will be discussed in this chapter, mainly in the light of Amartya Sen's theory (as explained in chapter 2). The findings will also be discussed in relation to the vision and methods of the PID programme, and the UNs SDG's 2030.

6.1 Democracy

To explore the informant's experiences of the process of initiating and implementing the water well project, I asked what they knew about the process and how it was initiated. The objective of this question was to find out whether the process had been democratic, in terms of broad community engagement and participation in the decision-making both within the community and with regards to the partnership with CELAD.

My informants in Lavulema told me that they had been called attention to the possibilities of getting funding and assistance with a development project through the United Methodist Church (UMC). There had been held a community meeting, led by the UMC pastor Mr. Lavali, where the community members had agreed to ask for a water well because they were suffering from a high presence of waterborne diseases due to lack of clean water. They were then encouraged to write a letter of interest to the CELAD office and a few months later representatives from the CELAD office came to their village to verify that the community members were the authors of the letter. When their request was approved, the community members were asked to form a committee of seven people to lead the project. I asked how the committee was formed, and my informants told me that the community nominated and elected the members of the committee.

The informants in Mamaka told me that the project was made possible by the UMC. Lack of access to clean water made the community exposed to waterborne diseases, affecting especially the children and the elders, and so they requested a water well. The procedure was, like in Lavulema, to send a letter of interest to the UMC, then form a project management committee of seven people. According to several of my informants, the entire community took part in the process of determining what kind of project to apply for. One of my informants said that they were especially happy with the way this particular project was implemented, because they had

had prior experiences with people from other organisations visiting their community without any follow up in the aftermath.

According to Sen's perspective on poverty as capability deprivation, giving people the possibility to lead the life one has reason to value is an important part of reducing poverty. An essential aspect of this is getting the opportunity to influence decision-making processes regarding choices that affects one's lives. Including the community in the decision-making process is important for several reasons. The whole idea of partnership is based upon a vision that the community and the implementing organisation should be equal partners. This is to ensure that whatever project initiated, it is a project that is needed and wished for by the community.

Fighting poverty is well helped by a democratic structure in a society. Corruption is one of the most pressing challenges in the work of creating a just society and reducing the poverty gap and can be prevented by democratic and transparent processes. As stated by Sen, democracy is important for three reasons: First, democracy has a *direct* importance because it affects the basic capability of political and social participation, which in turn is conducive to reducing poverty. Second, democracy has an *instrumental* role in strengthening the participation of the citizens. Third, democracy has a *constructive* role in letting the community members partake in assessing their needs (1999, p. 148). The PID programme seeks to strengthen the civil society and to develop democratic organisations.

Based on the findings in this study, it can be confirmed that the community members in Lavulema and Mamaka were given the task of deciding what kind of project they would apply for, in addition to democratically electing a local committee to lead the project. Moreover, from the informant's answers I got the impression that the whole community participated in the decision-making process, both in determining what project to apply for, and in the nomination and election of the project management committee. The informants were quite confident, and even seemed proud, when explaining how the community took part in the decision-making and in the election of the Project Management Committee (PMC). Furthermore, they seemed content with the people who were elected for the PMC and I was told that they had carefully selected community members who took their role seriously and who could be trusted with the task.

The fact that findings from the two communities shows that people are well informed about the project and its process, as well as being given the opportunity to participate and influence the decision-making process, touches upon the issue of transparency, which is stated by Sen as one of the five categories of freedom. Having an open, democratic process through which prevents corruption, contributes to creating a society in which its members can enjoy the freedom of interacting under guarantees of lucidity and to trust in a project to be carried out fairly.

Whether this process has been democratic in terms of the citizen's equal rights to participate in decision-making processes, is hard for me to judge. There is a possibility that there are some underlying power dynamics within the community that has hindered a free and equal participation for all parts. Considering that I spent only a short time in the communities, without the possibility to carefully select the informants, it might be a chance that there are others in the communities that had a different experience of the process. Another issue that keeps coming to mind is whether the informants held back on any negative information, because they would not jeopardise their possibilities to gain another project through PID. However, the impression I got from the interviews was that the whole community had the chance to participate, and that they were well informed during the project. In addition, when I raised the question of participation in the project, and eventual limitations, one of the women told me that only trusted and serious persons could be elected for the Project Management Committee. This tells me that they took the demand of transparency and anti-corruption seriously, which is important for the project to be democratically administered. Nevertheless, the fact that the communities has been given the opportunity of choosing what project to apply for, and that they have held seemingly open meetings in the process of deciding on and implementing the project, it seems like their experiences are that the water well projects are in accordance with the vision and values of the PID programme.

Amartya Sen writes about why democracy is an important focal point in a development process. Sen argues that democracy is preeminent to the fulfilment of economic needs, due to its qualities as having a direct importance in human living associated with basic capabilities, their instrumental and constructive role (Sen, 1999, pp. 147-148). Victoria Spaiser et al. have examined the dynamics of democracy and development, and found that:

Starting with democracy, we find that improved education and a certain standard of living as expressed in GNI per capita lead to an improved political climate [...]. One micro-level explanation for this relationship is that education makes people more critical and autonomous and educated people are likely to demand political changes once they have reached a certain standard of living and financial security that relieves them from daily existential worries and allows for long-term planning of society (Spaiser et al., 2014, p.8).

This could be read as a counter argument to Sen's statement that democracy need to be preeminent to other aspects such as economic betterment. On the contrary, on a civil society level, the implementation of democratic development projects could lead to educating the local community members in democratic governance, and by that bringing awareness to the positive effects of democracy from the grassroots' level and up. On a long-term basis, spreading knowledge about democracy might improve the political climate on a higher level.

In 2015, the UN presented 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be reached by 2030. Goal 16 is "to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies" and is formulated like this:

Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals is dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels (UN, 2018).

The structure of the PID programme is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Building on a democratic organisational structure with transparency as a condition, the PID programme contributes to reaching goal 16 on a local level.

In summary, the way the PID programme has been initiated has followed the same recipe in both Lavulema and Mamaka community, allowing the community members to partake in decision-making and management of the water well projects. The projects have proceeded in accordance with the values and goals stated by the PID programme and can also be seen as a small contribution towards reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals, on a local level.

6.2 Community empowerment

To explore the informants' experiences of community empowerment, I asked the informants what the role of the community was in the project, if they had gotten any training related to the project, and if they thought the community had gotten anything out of the project.

In both Lavulema and Mamaka, the community members had contributed with labour. The men were fetching local material like stones, "bush sticks," sand as well as participating in the construction work, while the women were providing food for the workers (cooking) and fetching water for them. Storage facilities was provided by the community members, to ensure that the materials and tools were kept safe. The informants expressed that they were happy with the fact that they contributed to the project, because their experience was that it brought development to the community.

Encouraging the whole community to participate in the execution of the project creates a sense of ownership, which is important in a partnership-focused programme. Ideally, all development aid should be done in a way so that the external collaboration partner can withdraw in the long run. According to Anderson et al., experiencing ownership to a facility or a project increases the sense of responsibility in terms of maintaining a facility (2012, pp. 67-69). Being able to contribute to shape your own future and community by direct participation in any given project is in accordance with the partnership model provided by the PID programme.

On questions regarding training related to the project, the informants in Lavulema stated that the members of the project management committee were given training in how to administer their role, whether it was as a co-ordinator, treasurer, stakeholder or advisor. They had also been given training in sanitation measures. I was told that the men were trained in how to maintain the water well, and how to repair it if it broke, and how to take care of the women and children. All community members were instructed to contribute with a small amount of money in case the tap got damaged, and some of them had learned how to construct the water well, knowledge they passed on to other community members.

Getting knowledge and training is important for several reasons. Firstly, having the knowledge of constructing, maintaining and repairing the water well is useful in a long-term perspective. This knowledge can be used for future projects and can also be taught to other communities. In

a community empowerment perspective, letting the community members actively take part in the management process as well as the construction work and the succeeding maintenance is in practice acknowledging their skills and responsibility. Secondly, knowing about what sanitary precautions to take contributes to keeping the water clean, and contributes to keep the population healthy. In the light of Sen's capability-focused view on poverty, it can be affirmed that not only is the health aspect a part of reducing poverty, but also the knowledge of how to prevent illnesses.

As directed by the PID training manual, the communities did nominate and elect seven members for a Project Management Committee (PMC), of which at least three members should be women. Pushing towards female participation in management committees and leading roles is, in the light of empowering communities, a step toward a societal transformation through which women to a higher degree gets heard and can influence their lives. The informants in Mamaka also told me that those who got the training was told that the project was not limited to benefit Christians (as UMC is a Christian organisation), but the whole community including Muslims. In addition to getting training in well maintenance and how to take care of the materials, they also learned how to mobilise the whole community to engage in the project, something they thought useful both during the project but also in their further daily life. Letting women take part in the Project Management Committee and participating doing other tasks was a new experience for the community members in Mamaka. All the informants agreed that bringing women into the project was nothing but positive, because the women contributed to making the work efficient and effective, and because it was easier for women to mobilise the women in the community than it was for the men.

“Empowering the community members’ skills and abilities to effectively and efficiently execute community development activities” are one of the objectives stated in the Partnership in Development training manual (PID, 2015, p. 29). Despite Hoppers notice on the critiques against the empowerment term (see sub-chapter 2.1.5), I still choose to use this caption in this paper. Partly, because it is the term used in the PID documents, and because I understand the term partly as giving the community members knowledge and skills they can make use of to further develop their community on a long-term basis, which is what PID seeks to achieve. Another reflection on the empowerment term is that it is also about giving people a sense of value, pride and self-respect by giving them the prospect of participating in decisions and events

regarding and influencing their lives. By letting the community members work out the applications for the project, including setting up a schedule for the process, the community members experience that they are respected and listened to, and their expertise on their needs and surroundings is taken into consideration. It is apparent that this mode of operation contributes to empowering the communities, in terms of valuing their opinions and competence. The topic of community empowerment also involves the societal transformation of bettering women's conditions, which the PID programme is aiming at.

Making women key participants in and beneficiaries of development work has become commonplace in contemporary development work, as it has been for a few decades already. Goal 5 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals is to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (UN, 2018). Part of the goal states that

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large (UN, 2018).

With a focus on empowering women as a part of their development work, the PID programme corresponds to the UN Sustainable Development Goals in their visions. Seeing that the informants report women to be more included, and that they have an overall positive experience with that matter, it is fair to assume that the project is in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in terms of empowering women.

Based on the findings in this study, my interpretation is that the inhabitants in Mamaka has been taught to let women participate in a project, an experience they have found positive and useful. The women were happy to be included, and the men acknowledged that bringing women into a project made it more successful, and that the community as a whole could work more efficiently. The study did not give any clear answers to whether this cross-gender collaboration was new to the inhabitants of Lavulema, but as one of the informants told me that it took a few days to get the men and the women to cooperate in the beginning, I am inclined to believe that this was the case also in Lavulema. Additionally, from the informants I did get the impression

that both men and women were happy with the fact that women were taking part in all phases of the project. One of the informants in Mamaka explained that before the PID programme was introduced to their community, they did not include women in projects, but that they after experiencing the positive effects of bringing men and women together had chosen to continue with this model for future projects. Furthermore, informants from both communities expressed that they appreciated getting involved by managing the project locally and getting training related to the water well project. They said that it made them feel respected and valued, and that they were proud to contribute with whatever their task was.

6.3 Poverty

The most evident effects of the water well projects were that the population in Lavulema and Mamaka experienced a drastic reduction in the occurrence of waterborne diseases like diarrhoea, cholera and dysentery. The informants from both villages expressed gratitude and happiness, saying that they were not suffering from illnesses anymore. Especially the children and the elders, who are the most vulnerable groups in their society, had gained better health. The access to clean water in their immediate surroundings did not only give the population better health conditions, it also had an indirect effect on the children's possibilities to go to school for two reasons. First, before they got the water well the children had to go several miles each day to fetch water, which made them come late for school, or not go to school at all. Especially in Lavulema, where the water well was constructed on the school ground, more families than before would send their children to school because they knew that the children could use the water well there. Second, illnesses like cholera, diarrhoea, and dysentery are highly contagious and sending sick children to school is not an option. Therefore, it is fair to assume that lowering the risk of health issues connected to contaminated water is conducive to a higher participation at school.

Sen's theory on poverty as capability deprivation is built upon an informational basis that he calls the "capability approach to justice." By this Sen means that when evaluating justice, or inequality, we need to look at more than merely income (or shortage as such). By measuring the freedoms an individual has to lead the life he or she has reason to value, we take into consideration the individuals' actual living and well-being. As Sen points out, there are several factors affecting the possibility an individual has to make use of his given bundle of commodities – either in terms of income or other goods. Health issues are one of the factors,

social conditions (welfare goods like public education) is another. When the communities in Lavulema and Mamaka gets access to clean water and, as a direct consequence, experiences a significant decline in the occurrence of life-threatening diseases, the individuals' freedoms to lead a life they have reason to value increases. The quality of life improves and minimising the risk of health issues contributes to giving the community members a greater freedom in terms of capabilities. Furthermore, getting the opportunity to send more children to school increases the families' and the individuals' life choices in a long-term perspective. As I understand Sen, poverty is in his view closely connected to inequality and well-being. Providing services that increases people's well-being and smoothens out inequalities are thus a contribution in the fight against poverty.

Seen in the light of Sen's theory on poverty as capability deprivation, several of the topics in this chapter are related to Sen's view on poverty. Creating democratic institutions and encouraging democratic processes in a society is conducive to poverty reduction, simply because the freedom to participate in decision-making processes is, in Sen's view, conducive to development. The nature of democracy demands a process through which the people has the possibility to influence the decisions that affects one's lives. In other words, democracy has the potential of smoothing out inequalities because one needs to listen to the community members and take their opinions into consideration.

When talking about utilities and well-being, there are great variations in what this means for an individual. Through a democratic process on any level, a fair distribution of goods or power is made possible.

Community empowerment, especially through strengthening the women's role, is also contributing to reducing poverty by giving women a voice, by giving women the opportunity and tools to shape their own and their families' future and by ironing out existing power dynamics between men and women in a community. In terms of Sen's capability approach to justice, it is fair to assume that the well-being of especially the women is enhanced when they are included in the decision-making process and given important roles in the management committee.

The first of UN's Sustainable Development Goals is stated "No poverty." The goal is described like this:

The SDGs are a bold commitment to finish what we started, and end poverty in all forms and dimensions by 2030. This involves targeting the most vulnerable, increasing access to basic resources and services, and supporting communities affected by conflict and climate-related disasters (UN, 2018).

In addition, goal 6 in the SDG's is to ensure access to water and sanitation for all. The PID programme contributes to reaching these goals by targeting vulnerable societies that suffers from poverty. Providing the communities with water wells serves as an important contribution in the work to minimising the occurrence of life-threatening diseases, and thus laying the foundation for a better quality of life. Furthermore, an indirect effect was that more children could go to school rather than spending hours every day to fetch water.

Based on the findings from the interviews, the population in the two villages seems happy and satisfied with the water well projects. They reported of better sanitary conditions, less occurrence of waterborne diseases and that they gained more time to do other tasks and chores than fetching water. Seeing how the PID programme seeks to target vulnerable, poor societies, and especially women and children, it is fair to say that the programme has contributed to bettering the life conditions for the targeted groups in Lavulema and Mamaka.

6.4 Partnership

When asking the informants how they understood the term partnership, they said that to them it meant unity and team work. Most of the informants in Lavulema explained their conception of the term partnership as something that brought development. The informants in Mamaka told me that partnership made a project become successful. In my interpretation, this points to two aspects of partnership: Unity and team work refers to the cooperation within the community, during the projects, and partnership as conducive to successful projects points at the partnership between the local community and the UMC. It seemed like the informants in both communities connected the term to the development project, this may be because I was the one asking, and that they saw me as a representative for the UMC. One of the informants even continued by thanking "us" (and by this he meant the UMC) for the help given to them, and that he was hoping that the relationship would continue. This led me to, in retrospect, question how sincere their answer was, if there were any kind of issues with the partnership between UMC and the

community they might not have told me out of fear of jeopardising their relationship and possible future projects. However, the informants' answers were overall positive. Partnership was considered to be a good thing for the community, as one of the informants said, because they valued team work and co-operation.

The informants' perceived experience of the partnership between the UMC and the community was also of interest to me. Curious to find out if the project had been carried out in accordance with PID's guidelines and with respect for the communities, I asked whether they considered the project to be done in a way that conferred with their idea of partnership. Again, the answers were overwhelmingly positive, in both villages. The informants told me that the work went on smoothly, without grumble, and that the relationship between UMC and the community was cordial.

To give the informants an opportunity to speak out if they had any complaints, I asked if there was anything they thought should be done differently, or better. In Lavulema, they told me that there was no other way it could have been done, and that the project was carried out the way the community wanted. The only thing they could ask for, was for another project, building accommodations for the school teachers so that they did not have to travel far distances to and from work every day.

In Mamaka, they said that the project went on smoothly, but that it was initiated in February which, according to the informants, was a month too early. The consequence was that the water well was dry for some time during the year. This is because the water level was not at the lowest in February, and the well was not dug deep enough. I did not get any answers to why the project was initiated a month too early, but in the letter of request, written by representatives from the local community, they requested the work to begin in April. The research did not give any answers to whether the preliminary investigations of the excavation area were thorough enough. It might be that, due to environmental changes/variations, the task of giving an exact estimate of when the water level is at the lowest may be complicated, but in this case, the work was initiated earlier than the receiving partners requested. For future research, it could be fruitful to find out the reason why the excavation was initiated earlier. The informants in Mamaka did also plead for another well, as there are more than 2000 inhabitants in the community and one well is not enough to serve all. Both communities seemed overall content with the water well projects, and uttered wishes of new projects to be carried out. Two of the objectives from the

PID training manual are to “improve the community members’ knowledge and understanding of partnership in community development initiatives [and] to encourage positive community development attitudes” (PID, 2015). The informants’ positive attitudes towards partnership in development projects shows that the PID programme has accomplished to manage these goals.

The partnership model in development work is fruitful for several reasons, given that it works in accordance with the local community. Anderson et al. demonstrates that participation, ownership and sustainability are crucial in good practice and development, as their research showed that the experience of ownership increases the chance that a project result will be maintained by the people in recipient societies. According to Anderson et al., engaging and involving the receiving parts in the projects narrows the gap between the insiders (people in the receiving communities) and the outsiders (external aid providers), and reduces the experience of dependency. And yet, they found that for this effect to happen, the participation needs to be at a certain level, involving the local partners in all the steps of the process (2012, pp. 67-68).

The concepts of partnership and participation are at the heart of the development agenda in the contemporary discourse. Being widely acknowledged as a necessity for sustainable development, there lies a pressure on development agencies and institutions to promote a participatory approach. Hopper reports claims that the participatory approach has become a “rubber-stamping exercise in order to enhance the credibility of projects,” and that development agencies and institutions have been accused of merely empty talk when citing a participatory approach (Hopper, 2012, p. 164). It is therefore important to ensure that the development projects that claim a participatory approach, are actually working *with* the local receiving communities with respect and with a thorough consideration of their needs and wishes.

Equally important is the sensitiveness to what demands one lays on the receiving partners in a development project – and how. Bringing development work into the grounds of others with preconditions concerning gender roles, political or organisational structures or economic governance can be a complicated task, being at the risk of maintaining the structures of colonialism. Thus, it is crucial that any kind of training that is promoted as conditional, or necessary for a project to be realised, must not impose on the receiving partner in a way that does not confer with their values. Bringing change can be a tough process, and there will in many cases be a need to take some unpopular decisions. Moreover, there is always a risk that

the receiving partners are in such a desperate situation, in need for assistance, that they will agree to conditions they might not have under different circumstances. To uncover such cases would require a much more extensive research than was possible for this thesis. The partnership model brings the potential to induce good changes in accordance with the receiving partners' wishes, if carried out with true respect and consideration for the receiving partners.

The partnership term in the PID model has, in my understanding, two dimensions. The first dimension regards the partnership between the international partner (in this case, MM in Norway) and the local partner (in this case CELAD and UMC Sierra Leone). The PID programme takes sight at simplifying the application process and reporting at all levels, with the objective to facilitate the communities' participation and keeping the main focus of all development work on a local level in the civil society. Furthermore, the responsibility for planning, implementation and evaluation of the development project should lie with the local collaboration partner, in this context CELAD and the community members (Metodistkirkens Misjonsselskap, 2018). This implies that the process is monitored by a local collaboration partner, which gives the local partner the main responsibility for a project. Letting the local collaboration partner be a decision-maker can increase the potential to work in accordance with local customs and values and contribute to strengthen the civil society.

The second dimension regards the partnership between the local collaboration partner and the receiving partner, and the partnership term as promoted through the PID model is in my understanding participatory development. This implies letting the community members take part in the decision-making process, giving them necessary training as well as urging them to take part in the practicalities when executing the work. Based on the findings from Lavulema and Mamaka, it is fair to assume that the water well projects has been successful on those terms. Furthermore, based on the data showing the inhabitants' participation in the decision-making process, the Project Management Committee, and in the practical work, I am inclined to believe that the PID programme has succeeded to ensure a sustainable development work through partnership and participation.

A part of the UN SDG's goal 17 is to "encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships" (UN, 2018). Goal 17 deals with the concept of partnerships to reach the goals and

is primarily directed towards global partnerships in sectors of finance and technology. Still, the goal does also point to partnerships on a civil society level. In the contemporary development discourse, partnership is highly in focus. The PID programme is a partnership between the Norwegian organisation MM, funded by the Norwegian government, and the UMC in Sierra Leone. The PID programme seeks to build democratic organisations, and to strengthen civil society. Through their expectation that all community members participate, and that women should be included, the PID programme contributes to strengthening the civil society.

7 CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, the sub-questions will be answered one by one, with a following conclusion to the main research question. The last sub-chapters in this section present the researcher's thoughts and reflections on the PID programme and on eventual further research to be done on the subject.

Through this study, I have sought to answer the following question:

How do the local inhabitants experience that they are affected by MM's development work in Lavulema and Mamaka in Sierra Leone?

In addition, there are four sub questions to help getting answers to the main question:

- 1. How has the receiving partners been experiencing the development project, in terms of democracy?**
- 2. How has the receiving partners been experiencing the development project, in terms of poverty?**
- 3. How have the receiving partners been experiencing the development project, in terms of community empowerment?**
- 4. What are the receiving partners' experiences of partnership?**

The data for this research are gathered through qualitative, semi-structured interviews of local inhabitants in Lavulema and Mamaka in Sierra Leone. The two villages have in the past years participated in a development project funded by MM, providing them with a water well. The first part of the thesis provides the historical context and the theoretical foundation for analysing the data, while the second part contains a presentation of the findings and subsequently a discussion of the findings. Through this chapter I will give a final conclusion on the experiences of the informants, and further thoughts on development work and the role of the Partnership in Development programme.

7.1 Answering the sub-questions

Since the main research question is rather general, I chose to include four sub-questions that would allow me to delve into more concrete topics, respectively being democracy, community empowerment, poverty and partnership. To find answers to the sub-questions, I have carried out qualitative interviews with some of the local inhabitants in two communities participating in MM's development project in Sierra Leone. The findings are then discussed in the light of the theory presented in chapter 2, mainly Amartya Sen's theory on development as freedom.

7.1.1. Experiences in terms of democracy

The first sub-question explores the receiving partner's experiences in terms of democracy.

The PID programme aims at developing democratic organisations. In my understanding, this means that any development project should be carried out in a democratic manner. Implicit in this lies the demand that the receiving partners are well informed on beforehand and that they are included in the decision-making process. In addition, if possible, given responsibility for decisions that affect their community and daily lives. Moreover, the implementing organisation should make sure that the decision-making process within the community is democratic. Based on the findings, I am inclined to believe that the community members in Lavulema and Mamaka were well informed about the projects and its possibilities. The informants seemed well acquainted with the project and its process; they were all well aware of how the application process went on, and that the members of the Project Management Committee (PMC) were nominated and elected. From what the informants told me, I did also get the impression that the whole community participated in deciding what kind of project to apply for (as the PID programme also provides other services like latrines, bridges, schools and so on). There is also a demand that at least three out of maximum seven members of the PMC should be women, which the informants knew about. In both communities, there were three women in the committee.

I found that democracy and inclusion encourage positive development attitudes. All the informants expressed that they were happy to participate and contribute with whatever task they had, and that they would like to participate in eventual future projects. When the whole community takes part in the decision-making process, the community members experience that

they have a voice and that they can influence the outcome. This leads to a stronger sense of ownership to a project, which in the long term contributes to a projects' sustainability. This because the responsibility for the given project (in this case, the water well) lies as much on the community as on the implementing organisation. It is fair to assume that there will be less disagreements or envy among the community members when important roles are given through democratic elections.

7.1.2. Experiences in terms of community empowerment

The second sub-question explores the receiving partners' experiences of the development project in terms of community empowerment.

I found that many of the community members in both Lavulema and Mamaka had participated actively in the water well projects, in one way or another. The men, and especially the youths, had contributed with work labour during the construction as well as fetching local materials like sand, stones and bush sticks. The women prepared food and brought water for the workers. All the informants told me that they were happy to contribute with labour. In addition, the communities were asked to provide storage facilities to keep the imported materials and tools safe. Moreover, they were given training in well maintenance, and in how to repair the tap if it got broken. One of the informants expressed gratitude for being entrusted with the kind of responsibility they were given with this project, another told me that they felt proud and respected when given the opportunity to take part in the project.

When bringing development services to a community as an outsider, it is important to consider the needs and wishes of the community members. Acknowledging their expertise and skills by letting them take part in the decision process and in the work, gives people a sense of pride and respect. The PID programme has a focus on local needs, possibilities and solutions, which makes the development project run in accordance with what the receiving part needs and wishes for, and for what they express gratefulness. It is fair to assume that Entrusting the receiving partners with work and management roles makes them feel respected and valued.

Including the women is positive for the community: In both Lavulema and Mamaka, the informants reported that they were happy and content with the fact that women took part in the project work. In Lavulema, bringing men and women together took some persuasion in the

beginning, but after a few days they recognised the positive effects of cooperating. All the informants agreed that the project was executed more efficiently when men and women worked together. One of the informants in Mamaka told me that the PID programme introduced them to the forming of a Project Management Committee as well as letting women take part in it. Further, he said that they thought it to be so successful and positive for the community that they had kept this way of working together and including women.

Empowering the women in a community by giving them responsibility and a voice in matters regarding the whole community contributes to bettering women's conditions. Both the male and the female informants in Lavulema and Mamaka were happy with the model of cross-gender collaboration on the development project, because they meant that a project would be more successful and effectively executed when men and women cooperated.

7.1.3. Experiences in terms of poverty

The third sub-question explores the receiving partners' experiences of the development project in terms of poverty.

I found that access to clean water increases people's capabilities. The informants in Lavulema and Mamaka reported that after they got the water well, they experienced a significant reduction in the occurrence of waterborne diseases like cholera, diarrhoea and dysentery. Before they got the water well, the children and the elder were often suffering from illness, and they had even experienced deaths due to these diseases. I was told that they did not get sick anymore, and that the number of children going to school had increased as an aftereffect. Furthermore, the women and the children did no longer have to go several miles every day to fetch water, which gave them more time to do other chores.

Increasing people's capabilities in terms of opportunities to get education, and improved health is, according to Sen, reducing poverty. Through his theory of poverty as capability deprivation Sen states that the possibilities to lead the life one values, and our opportunities to make use of our possessions are affected by conditions like sanitary facilities, or the degree of access to education. Providing clean water, and by that improving the general health conditions among the populations of Lavulema and Mamaka, has given them better life conditions as well as resulted in a higher number of children going to school.

7.1.4. Experiences in terms of partnership

The fourth sub-question explores the receiving partners' experiences of partnership in the development project.

The term partnership, as explained by the informants in Lavulema and Mamaka, means unity and team work, successful projects, and development. It was apparent that to them that partnership brought something positive to the community. Furthermore, all the informants agreed that the relationship between the UMC and the community was cordial and went on smoothly, without grumble. Considering the findings related to the topics of democracy, community empowerment and poverty, it is fair to assume that this could be due to the model of the PID programme, where the recipient communities are co-responsible for all stages of the process – from deciding what project to apply for, writing the application and forming the Project Management Committee, to participating in the construction work and finally, future maintenance of the water well.

I discovered that the work to excavate the water well in Mamaka started a month too early, according to the informants. As a result, the well does not supply water throughout the whole year. In their letter of request to the CELAD office, they suggested the work to begin in April, a time when the water levels are at the lowest, but the excavation work began in February. To avoid this happening in future projects, there might be a need to perform more detailed preliminary investigations of the local conditions, or examine what circumstances made the work begin already in February. Excavation of the well needs to be started at the right time to ensure water supply throughout the year.

7.2 Answering the main research question: Experiences of participating in MM's development work

The informants in the two communities reported on very similar experiences related to all the topics I brought up, which can point to the uniformity and stability in the implementation and execution of the PID programme. It has been shown that the model of the PID programme, implemented by MM in collaboration with UMCSL has, according to the research, given positive experiences in the communities of Lavulema and Mamaka. First of all, the inhabitants of Lavulema and Mamaka has experienced significant reductions in the occurrence of serious illnesses, due to access to clean water through the water wells provided by MM. An indirect

effect of getting access to clean water, that the informants experienced as positive, was that more children got the opportunity to go to school because they no longer had to walk many miles every day to fetch water, and because their general health was improved.

Second, the structure of the PID programme enforces a democratic process, in which the whole community should take part in the decision making and in electing the members of the Project Management Committee. Based on the findings, my impression was that the projects had went on in a democratic manner, and that it was appreciated by the inhabitants of Lavulema and Mamaka. There was also a demand that the women should take part in the project work, and that at least three out of seven members in the PMC should be women. According to the research, bringing women into projects like this was new to the inhabitants in both Lavulema and Mamaka. The informants reported that this was a positive experience, because they thought that any given project would be more efficiently executed and successful if the men and women cooperated. In Mamaka, they had kept on with this custom after the PID programme was finished.

Thirdly, the informants described how being entrusted with responsibility, decisions and management roles, as well as participating at all stages of the process, made them feel proud, respected and valued, and I was told that they were gratefully contributing with whatever their task was.

Lastly, their experiences of the partnership with the UMC was overall positive. The projects went on exactly the way they wished for, without grumble, and the relationship between the communities and UMC was, according to all the informants, cordial.

In conclusion it is fair to say that the water well projects has given the people of Lavulema and Mamaka a better quality of life, and that the projects has contributed to decrease poverty in the two villages.

7.3 What is my contribution?

This thesis presents and discusses the experiences of people in Lavulema and Mamaka, who have participated in MM's development project. The project has provided the two villages with water wells. This study is a small contribution to the existing research on development aid seen from the receivers' perspective – which there exists very little research on. Although the

findings from this study cannot be generalised, my opinion is that there are still some level of transferability to other, similar cases. When international organisations enter a community with the purpose of bringing development aid, it is important to work together with the local peoples and listen to their needs and wishes. Focusing on local possibilities and solutions is a good way of executing sustainable development projects that promotes ownership and acknowledges the expertise and skills of the local people. No community is the same, consequently will there be various requirements and circumstances depending on where a project is implemented. Cooperating with the locals through participation and shared responsibility gives the implementing organisation knowledge and opportunity to execute a project without violating any cultural customs or structures. In this frame of reference, this study shows how the receiving partners in Lavulema and Mamaka experiences their participation and how they are affected by a development program with this kind of model.

7.4 Researcher's perspectives

7.4.1 Evaluating the PID programme

This being the first study of the receiving partners' experiences of MM's development project, there are no previous research to compare with, or draw new conclusions from. There is, however, possible to give an evaluation of the PID model, and although it is outside of the scope of this thesis, I have chosen to do so in this subchapter.

Considering the methods of the PID programme, as found in the research, it seems to me like MM's development work focuses on local solutions and local participation. The PID programme seeks to avoid the concept of donor and receiver with separate responsibilities. I think they have managed to do this in the best way, given their respective roles. Although the PID programme is initiated and implemented by MM and the UMC, their beneficiaries are not limited to members of UMC congregations, which I see as a strength. Their projects are, however, primary initiated in communities that has a UMC congregation, this is understandable because the organisational structure is already in place where there is a church. All things considered, the PID programme seems like a useful and commendable model when implementing development aid and could potentially serve as a template for other development programs and development agencies.

7.4.2 Further research needed

The findings from Lavulema and Mamaka shows the experiences of a small number of people living in two small communities in Sierra Leone. The interviews were carried out in the course of a few days, which put some limitations on the possibilities to dig deeper into the material. It could be interesting to follow the communities in a longer time span, to explore whether the projects had brought any structural changes, especially in terms of democracy and gender equity, and how the community members experienced eventual changes. For the scope of this study, it was not possible to discover such aspects. Based on the findings, I am inclined to believe that the water well projects did bring some positive changes like democratic elections of members of the Project Management Committee, including women at all stages of the project work, but to find out whether these changes were limited to the PID projects or has had long-lasting effects influencing other parts of the community life, would demand a longer and more extensive study.

Due to the scope of the study, it was not possible to examine whether there were any hidden power structures at play that might have hindered anyone from participating in the decision-making process or in the development activities. Further research in the communities participating in MM's development projects with a larger number of informants and over a longer time span would be an interesting research project, giving a more profound understanding of how MM's development projects affects the recipient partners.

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APPENDIX

Interview guide

How do the local inhabitants experience that they are affected by MM's development work in Sierra Leone?

1. Do you know anything about MM's project and how it has been conducted?
2. Have you had a participant role in the project, and if so, what has been your task(s)?

For participants in project

3. Have you had to take any courses/lessons connected to your participation in the project?
4. If so – what topics, and what do you think of them?
5. How did you get to take part in the project?
6. Could anyone in the village take part in the elections for the project group?
7. Do you know of anyone that wanted to take part, but for some reason wasn't given the opportunity (and if yes, why?)

Experiences in terms of democracy

8. Who took the initiative/do you know how it came about?
9. What has been the role of the local community in establishing the project?
10. Has the local community been included when important decisions have been taken?
11. Do you know if there have been any conditions/preconditions related to project?

related to:

- positions in the society
- religion
- age

12. Do you think your society has gained anything from the project?
13. What do you think has been the outcome of the project?
14. From the perspective of
 - The local community
 - Your personal life

15. Is there anything that you think could have, or should have, been done differently?

Experiences in terms of gender equality

16. Do you think that your daily life has changed after you got local access to clean water, and if so, how?
17. Do you know if there have been any conditions/preconditions related to project, related to gender?
18. Have you noticed any changes when it comes to perspectives on gender and gender roles?
 - Among men
 - Among women

19. Has it had any effects regarding personal hygiene?
20. Has it had any effects regarding children's, specifically girls', opportunities to go to school?
21. What do you think about the future and your possibilities?

Experiences in terms of poverty

22. Has it affected the economy?
 - In the local community
 - In your personal life
23. Has it had any effects on the health care system
 - In what ways? (less diseases, less infant mortality, treatment to more people, etc.)
24. Has it changed the women's possibilities for working?
25. Has it had any effects on your quality of life?
26. Has it contributed to creating jobs?
 - For whom?

Experiences of partnership

27. Partnership: what does that mean to you?
28. Has the project been executed in a way that confers with your idea of partnership?
29. How do you perceive the cooperation between MM and the local project group?
30. Have you been given any information about the project before, during or after the project?
31. Have you had the opportunity to take part in the project?
32. Is there anything that could have, or should have, been done differently?