SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD APPROACHES
THE FRAMEWORK, LESSONS LEARNT FROM PRACTICE
AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

By

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Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches

The framework, Lessons learnt and policy implications

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Plan

• Refresher on SLAs
• Lessons learnt from international practice
• Two SLA applications
• Implications for supportive policy
Origins/ Definition

- Dates back to Chambers & Conway, early 1990s, famine and food insecurity
- Gained momentum late 90s
- "A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks." (Chambers and Conway's, 1991)
What are Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches (SLA)?

- A way of thinking about the objectives, scope and priorities for development.
- Place people & their priorities at the centre of development.
- Focus poverty reduction interventions on empowering the poor, supporting their access to assets, and developing an enabling policy and institutional environment.

Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches Principles

- **People-centered**: Focus on perspectives, priorities and strengths of people
- **Holistic**: Recognize different factors/processes influence people, the multiple livelihood strategies in pursuit of multiple livelihood outcomes.
- **Dynamic**: Recognize that livelihood strategies change over time.
- **Build on strengths**: Start with an analysis of strengths rather than needs.
- **Consider macro-micro linkages**: to inform more supportive policies and institutions.
The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

Livelihoods approaches are based on a conceptual framework to aid analysis of the factors affecting peoples’ livelihoods.

Livelihoods assets

- Human Capital
- Natural Capital
- Financial Capital
- Physical Capital
- Social Capital

The Poor
Livelihoods assets

- **human capital**: health, education, knowledge and skills, and ability to work/adapt
- **natural capital**: natural resources such as land, soil, water, forests and fisheries
- **social capital**: social resources, formal & informal networks, access to decision-making, etc.
- **physical capital**: infrastructure (roads, water supply and sanitation, communications, schools) and tools and technology for production
- **financial capital**: financial resources including income from employment, trade and remittances, savings and credit

The Asset Mix

- Different households have different access to livelihood “assets”

- Livelihoods affected by:
  - diversity of assets
  - amount of assets
  - balance between assets
So……

Human capital
• no education
• limited skills

Natural capital
• landless

Financial capital
• low wages
• no access to credit

Physical capital
• poor water supply
• poor housing
• poor communications

Social capital
• low social status
• discrimination against women

= an extremely reduced “livelihood pentagon”

“Vulnerability” Context

Vulnerability Context
Shocks
Seasonality
Trends
Changes

The Poor
"Vulnerability" Context

The vulnerability context within which people pursue their livelihoods includes:

- **Shocks**: Conflict, natural shocks (floods, droughts, etc), economic shocks, Health shocks
- **Seasonality**: seasonal fluctuations in prices, production, employment opportunities
- **Trends and changes**: Population, environmental change, technology, markets and trade
Policies, Institutions & Processes (PIPs)

- cover the complex social, economic and political context within which people pursue their livelihoods strategies
- PIPs operate at global, national, regional, district and local levels.
- Include policy and legislation, social and political organization, governance, service delivery and resource access institutions

Livelihood Strategies
Production, investment, reproduction

Combining:
- the assets they can access

Taking account of:
- the vulnerability context

Supported or hindered by:
- policies, institutions and processes.

..... *Leading to*
Livelihood Outcomes

- increased income
- reduced vulnerability
- increased well-being
- improved food security
- more sustainable use of natural resources

Livelihood Outcomes

Poverty - a “poor” livelihood outcome:

- based on a fragile set of livelihood assets
- unable to adapt to shocks, changes or trends
- not supported, or hindered by policies, institutions and processes (do not allow a good use of assets)
- result of inappropriate livelihood strategies
The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework by DFID (adapted for SDC, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation)
Lessons learnt from practice

• A series of reviews was undertaken mainly by DFID in 1999, 2002 and 2008 on experiences from the use of livelihood approaches to rural development

• They came to the following conclusions:

Lessons learnt from practice

• The approach has been successfully used at international, national, regional and local levels

• For research, planning, monitoring and evaluation, and policy development

• To move beyond sectoral and institutional boundaries.

• For the identification of development priorities and new activities and to review current activities (not designed with SLA)
Lessons learnt from practice

- Overall SLAs are most useful as an analytical tool.
- SLAs can improve the quality of entry points. (entry points that more conventional approaches may miss)
- SLAs can improve the relevance/effectiveness of interventions.
- By not being restricted to a single-sector, SLAs open up opportunities for a range of partners.

Lessons learnt from practice

- SLAs do not ensure sustainability.
  Environmental, social, economic and institutional sustainability need to be addressed/negotiated stakeholders
- Partners are likely to be sectoral ministries; limited ability to embrace the holism of SLAs
- Any organization adopting SL approaches is bound to face internal challenges: review institutional procedures, support staff to develop new skills and to learn by doing
Lessons learnt from practice

Particular areas where SLA have been valuable include:

• SL can help identify the key differences between the poorest and other groups as well as being used to track changes over time.
• Analysing complex trends such as climate change and conflict situations and linking these to practical action.
• Providing a framework for understanding the recent food crisis and how and why it affects different groups in different ways.

Lessons learnt from practice

• In climate change adaptation work a key objective is to strengthen people's overall resilience as the future becomes more uncertain.

• It is thus important to work on:
  - using natural resources more effectively
  - diversifying economic activity
Both areas are at the heart of SL thinking.
Action-oriented recommendations

- The holistic analysis should lead to one or more focused interventions.
- Initial entry points may begin by addressing a community priority in one sector, and take in other sectors as the programme matures.
- This allows sequential movement into areas that require more community awareness, such as NRM interventions.

SECTORAL ENTRY POINTS AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS PROJECTS

Possible Sectoral Entry Points

Projects or Project Phases

Housing/Infrastructure

Neirab Palestinian Refugee Camp
Application of SL approaches at the policy/programming level

UNDP Drylands Development Centre

UNDP Dryland Development Centre (DDC)

• Emerged from UNSO (1973) or the UN Sudano-Saharan office to combat desertification and drought; a technical operation for drought relief.

• In 2001, UNSO reviewed its identity; process largely influenced by livelihood thinking.

• A new programmatic approach was adopted. DDC launched the Integrated Drylands Development Programme (IDDP): a comprehensive program delivering policy advice and technical backstopping for enhancing livelihoods in the drylands.
UNDP Dryland Development Centre (DDC)

• Focus shifted from technical interventions targeting natural resources to a comprehensive approach to drylands development putting people at the centre.

• Natural resource management objectives were balanced with poverty alleviation objectives.

• DDC interventions today are along 3 lines:
  - Building capital assets of dryland people.
  - Reducing vulnerability of dryland populations.
  - Promoting good governance of natural resources.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

DDC Interventions
Examples of on-going DDC initiatives

- Morocco & Lebanon: Enhancing market access for drylands producers/products (vulnerability context, PIP, livelihood assets)
- Yemen: Decentralized governance of water resources (PIP box)
- Tunisia: Elaboration local development plans and their integration (livelihood assets, diversification, PIPs)
- Syria: Enhancing community adaptation to drought (Vulnerability context, livelihood assets)

Lessons learned

- **Buy into "SL approaches" at all levels**: the promoting agency, policy-makers and implementers
- Catalyzed a shift in thinking in DDC from a dispersed project management operation to a holistic programmatic approach.
- Pushed for a new way of promoting sustainable land management; people rather than land
Application of SL approaches at the analysis level

The case of Aarsal, Lebanon.

The case of Aarsal, Lebanon

- Aarsal is a large village (35,000 people)
- On the dry slopes of the Anti-Lebanon mountain.
- Covers 5% of Lebanon
- Traditionally agro-pastoral (sheep and goat grazing; wheat and barley planting)
The Aarsali paradox

- During the last 50 years, Aarsal witnessed a massive expansion of fruit tree production (Cherries and apricots).
- Positive impact on Aarsali livelihoods.
- Opposite trend in the rest of Lebanon, with declining areas under fruit and incomes from agriculture.

The research question raised: “Why were the Aarsali people able to expand fruit tree production while others in the rest of Lebanon were not?”
The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

We looked for elements of explanation in the context, the assets and the PIP box

We wanted to explain a strategy: Expansion of fruit tree production
Answers

Why fruit tree production in Aarsal?

- **Context**: reverse migration from the city caused by civil war, capitalization from smuggling activities across the Syrian border
- **Capital assets**: Availability of land, low level of education, labor force
- **Livelihood strategies**: no migration outside Lebanon, quarries allowed livelihood diversification
- **PIP box**: no social security; trees perceived as a retirement fund, no rural development strategy from the government.

Lessons learned

- SLF offers a comprehensive framework for analysis
- helps organize an otherwise complex process
- needs adequate time and room for effective participation from affected communities
- guides development interventions and identifies entry points based on people's priorities
Challenges

- Need to collect/analyze data and relate knowledge from different disciplines.
- Need to combine different methodologies (secondary data, interviews, participatory assessments, landscape and history maps, GIS analysis)
- Need to understand and relate changes with time (livelihood strategies and NRM practices)

Policy implications

Supportive policy environment

- **Supportive international agreements**: trade policy, debt relief and conservation
- **Supportive development policy**: improving access to assets, reducing vulnerability, enhancing economic growth and promoting environmental sustainability
Policy implications

- Coordination between institutions/sectors to respond to livelihoods/multi-sectoral
- Decentralization for better coordination in policy development/implementation
- Good governance central to the objectives of ownership and empowerment critical to SLAs
- Gender empowerment improving women’s access and participation

Policy implications

Initial capitalization of the poor

- Many development interventions, by their very nature, exclude the poorest who do not possess the necessary asset base
- Initial investments must be made to provide the very poor with a minimum asset base if they are to be brought back into the development process
Policy implications

- ESCWA and member countries are committed to the International Development Goals of poverty reduction and environmental conservation.

- Adopting the livelihoods approach to understanding poverty, is expected to make a direct contribution to achieving this aim.

- It will facilitate the identification of practical priorities for action that are based on the views and interests of those concerned.

Thank you!