THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH IN MENA:
A BITTER SWEET EXPERIENCE

By

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Sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) in dry land MENA: a bitter sweet experience

"Adopting the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach for Promoting Rural Development in the ESCWA region"

Environment & Sustainable Development Unit

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Layal Dandache

Livelihoods
I- The intrinsic risks when adopting SLA-1

- SLA is a **western imported paradigm**
  Parachuted to the region based on western ideology rather than local practice.

- **Intrinsic resistance** to “western” participatory processes
  Socio-political, cultural and institutional

- **“Development tourism”**
  When the process of participatory research will freeze at the problem definition stage (Dudley, 1993).

- **Contextualization** (arabization) is complicated and exhausting
II- The bitter sweet experience
ESDU experience:
10 years of development research in dry lands MENA…

How do communities in dry land MENA sustain their livelihoods in an uncertain world?

1- The Sweet SLA experience
1- The sweet experience

Highlighting diversification as a livelihood strategy.

Livelihood diversification is “the process by which rural families construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in their struggle for survival and in order to improve their standards of livings.” (Ellis, 1998)
1- The sweet experience

- Exploring linkages between livelihood analysis and NRM
- SLA helping in designing development research initiatives pertinent to local people & generating needed knowledge to enhance their livelihoods.

*Analysis of the vulnerability context, structures and processes which define livelihood opportunities.*

2- The bitter SLA experience
2- The bitter taste of SLA

Major issues unresolved by SLA:

- Sustainability of livelihoods vs. Sustainability of the ecological systems that make up these livelihoods.
- SLA addresses the dry land predicament in developing countries largely at the micro (sometimes meso) level, but not the macro level.
- Uncertain global forces
- Overshadow large-scale processes operating behind the scenes which will localize themselves in another problem (Rocheleau et al. 1995)
- Requires hybridization with other methodologies.

Globalization and uncertainty

*Confronted with external alien forces,*…

*…. they become either apprehensive or falsely accommodating*
III- Adoption of SLA?

- Uncertainties are further magnified in the vulnerable context of dry lands.

- Ecological uncertainty is complicated by rapidly changing policy and economic environments (Ngaido, 1998)

- Ashley & Carney, 1999- DFID
  - SLA can increase costs of development activities
  - SLA does not ensure that sustainability is addressed.
  - Power relations are under emphasized

*SLA is too complex to be applied at the local level & too big to be applied at the project level
A luxury in dry land MENA?
Too Little, Too Late?

More ethnographic approach