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for Promoting Rural Development in the ESCWA Region”
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**THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH IN MENA:
A BITTER SWEET EXPERIENCE**

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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**

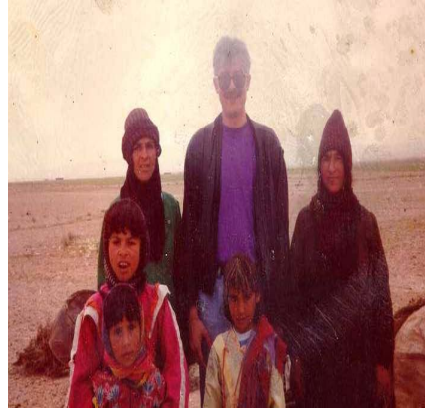
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I- The intrinsic risks when adopting SLA-1



- SLA is a **western imported paradigm**

Parachuted to the region based on western ideology rather than local practice.



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I- The intrinsic risks when adopting SLA-1

- 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?*



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1- The Sweet SLA experience



1- The sweet experience

Putting people in the center



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Environnement, Société, Développement Urbain

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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)

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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



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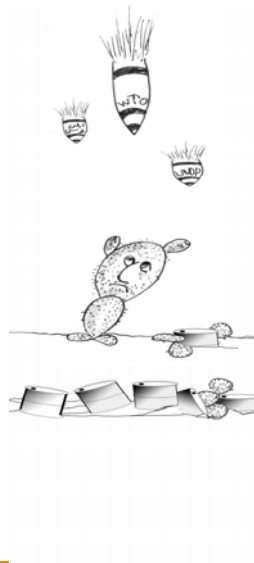
*SLA is too complex to be applied at the local level
& too big to be applied at the project level
A luxury in dry land MENA?*



Symposium International, Montpellier, France, 21-25 Nov. 1994

Recherches-système
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Too Little, Too Late?

More ethnographic approach