

Lessons learnt from Khanya-aicdd's experience of using the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach¹

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Khanya-aicdd was established in August 1998, and has pioneered work on community-driven development and sustainable livelihood approaches (SLA) across Africa. In the last decade, they have taken the SLA, applied it, implemented it and contextualised it across Africa. The following excerpt chronicles the evolution of Khanya-aicdd's approach to applying the SLA in Africa.

Introduction

Khanya-aicdd has been involved in the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach since mid-1998, when we were asked to write a paper on Decentralisation and Sustainable Rural Livelihoods for the first DFID conference on Sustainable Livelihoods (July 1998). This gave rise to research on Institutional Support for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods in Southern Africa which covered Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Prior to this, we were also involved with DFID-funded work in decentralisation in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

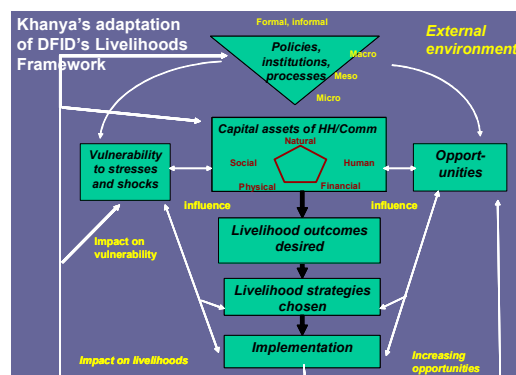
As a result of this work, we were one of a small group of organisations (and the only non-UK one) contracted by the Sustainable Livelihoods Support office to support DFID in developing and applying the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. We undertook a significant number of assignments through this including a number of papers. In addition, we also developed a series of multi-country action learning projects to address specific issues emerging which included:

- how communities could influence plans and resource allocation (on community-based planning, CBP) and,
- community-based approaches to service delivery (on community-based worker systems, CBWs).

From this, some of the lessons learned from applying the approach include:

Applying and adapting the conceptual base: We have adapted the Sustainable Livelihoods

Framework to make it easier to understand. In Figure 1 (see right) the community and their assets are at the centre surrounded by the opportunities, vulnerabilities, risks, policies, institutions and processes that they face. As the community seeks to achieve certain livelihood outcomes, they choose their livelihood strategies based on their assets, perceived opportunities², vulnerabilities/threats, and the policy and service environment. Once they implement their livelihood strategies, these



¹ For further discussion on our experience please contact Ian Goldman at Goldman@khanya-aicdd.org

² Added to the framework particularly in applying the SLA in a planning context, where it can then be related to a SWOT



should impact on their assets, reduce their vulnerabilities, and in the process may influence the policies and institutions. Over the years, we have applied the SLA in a number of settings as follows:

- In **planning**, e.g. structuring the Poverty Eradication Strategy for the Free State, South Africa, developing the methodology for community-based planning, and in the Integrated Development Plan for Mangaung, within the Free State Province of South Africa;
- In **designing services**, e.g for forestry in Uganda;
- In **evaluating** livelihoods and Department of Social Development (DSD) services in the 21 poorest nodes in South Africa.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Principles: We express these principles as *“How the development system needs to work in order to promote sustainable livelihoods.”* This moves it from promoting Sustainable Livelihoods, to an approach, and then to development.

It has been of extreme value to have a set of principles which can be referred to, which are beyond an individual’s whim and which are seen to have international credibility, and therefore some of the more awkward ones are less easily avoided. As development is in the end about values, the Sustainable Livelihoods Principles provides us with a set of values that serve as a foundation for our programmes or projects.

The 6 Governance Issues: the Policies, Institutions and Processes (PIP) box of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework covers a very wide spectrum of issues, namely:

- Levels – micro, meso, macro
- Western (often colonial originated) systems and traditional systems of governance, informal institutions
- Different sectors

It proved very complex to try and extrapolate what policies, institutions and processes exist at these different levels, sectors, and types of institutions. To simplify this complexity, we came up with 6 Governance Issues that were based on what one would aim to see at the different levels, if the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach was being implemented. The resultant issues that were developed are indicated below.

Box 1: 6 Governance issues

Empowered communities at micro (community) level

1. People active and involved in managing their own development, claiming their rights and exercising their responsibilities
2. A network of responsive, active and accessible services, whether community-based, private sector or by government

Strengthened management of services at district and local government level (meso)

3. At local government level (lower meso) services facilitated, provided or promoted effectively and responsively, coordinated and held accountable
4. At the upper meso level (province/region), support and supervision are provided to the levels below, as well as strategic regional planning

Realigned centre - macro (national, regional and global) level

5. The centre providing strategic direction, redistribution and oversight, and responsive to micro and meso-level realities and inputs

6. International institutions and processes help to promote the capacity of nation states to take on strategic roles to eradicate poverty, and responsive to micro- and meso-level realities.

Some of the lessons that have been learnt from applying these governance principles are indicated below:

Khanya-aicdd's experience of applying the 6 Governance Issues

Governance issue	How we have addressed this	Learnings
1. People active and involved in managing their own development, claiming their rights and exercising their responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting community-based planning processes to maximise local ownership and community action Mechanisms for funding projects at community level Building local level structures such as ward committees, CBOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government is often very sceptical of what communities can do – Khanya-aicdd's experience has shown that they can do a lot if supported Much more needed on this area
2. A network of responsive, active and accessible services, whether community-based, private sector or by government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting community-based services as a systemic response (eg for home-based care) so community groups are providing services to each other. This builds on what exists anyway rather than a professional-based system of services which is inaccessible Developed livelihoods-based market research as a way of identifying appropriate services eg in forestry sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-based systems can work, are one third the cost of traditional government-only systems and are particularly applicable for service needed frequently, that are not technically complex, and don't have economies of scale Livelihoods-based market research was successful at identifying services needed
3. At local government level (lower meso) services are facilitated, provided or promoted effectively and responsively, coordinated and held accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting accountability processes by local communities for ensuring that aspirations of persons, households and communities are fulfilled. Support to local government/district levels to improve services Working on effective local government planning that builds on community-based plans, addressed poverty, and is strategic about economic development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved planning is possible That effective coordinated plans requires a funding mechanism at local government level that provides incentives for participation, e.g through a district development grant There is still a major lack of effective accountability mechanisms and much more work is needed here
4. The province/ region supporting and supervising the levels below, and undertaking strategic regional planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to provincial/regional levels to improve management of services and accountability Facilitation of provincial development plan (for Free State) and provincial poverty eradication strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and supervision role inadequate in many places, and often underestimated in decentralisation processes
5. Centre providing strategic direction, redistribution and oversight, and responding to micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of powers and functions of tiers of government, using 6 governance issues as base (Lesotho and SA) Involving national government to see 	



Governance issue	How we have addressed this	Learnings
and meso-level realities and inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the lessons for policy from the emerging work Working on national policies eg Community Development in SA, National Forest Plan in Uganda, using a responsive process 	
6. International institutions and processes promote the capacity of nation states to take on strategic roles to eradicate poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linkage to donor-funded programmes to share lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Learnings from applying the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

In Planning: Khanya-aicdd has applied the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) to develop the community-based planning system to guide the components of the planning process, for instance where preferred livelihood outcomes are the core basis for prioritisation. This also includes how it is done where the disaggregated principle is used so that different social groups are identified and a livelihoods analysis undertaken on each. This has been seen to work well, and community-based planning (CBP) is probably one of the best applications internationally of the SLA in a tool.

In project and programme design: The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach has been used to guide programme design for the Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Programme in South Africa, or for a Botswana SRL Programme. Using the principles and 6 Governance Issues as part of the appraisal helped to ensure that potential weaknesses were avoided.

A common misunderstanding with the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach is the perception that a livelihood only refers to how people raise income, and not how they secure their life across all the asset types. Therefore action on livelihoods is conflated often with the development of Small, Micro and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMME), as opposed to broader action to support people's quality of life or livelihood. For example Khanya is working with the Department of Social Development in South Africa to look at a variety of livelihoods support interventions, not purely through the income lens.

About this excerpt:

This brief article forms an excerpt from a paper chronicling Khanya-aicdd's experience of using the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. This paper has been developed for the ESRC-funded Seminar Series on the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach that will be held at the IDS Sussex, UK, with the first in October 2008. During March/ April 2009, Khanya-aicdd will host a subsequent seminar on SLAs and Community-Driven Development (CDD) which will draw on the expertise of a range of researchers and practitioners, particularly from the Southern and Eastern Africa region. One of the central and distinctive features of the SLA is the aim of putting people at the centre of development and CDD is one practical means of doing this, but evidence of improved development outcomes is sparse. This seminar would provide a platform to analyse Community-driven Development (CDD) theory and practice in relation to the key principles of Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches.

