

# Sustaining Livelihoods in Southern Africa

**Issue: 11 October 2003**

**Theme: Sustainable Livelihoods and Gender**

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## Editor's notes

This month's theme is sustainable livelihoods and gender. This bulletin aims to highlight ways in which gender issues should systematically be addressed throughout the cycle of SL focused development. Kath Pasteur and the Team from Livelihood Connect are the main authors of this newsletter. Livelihoods Connect is a learning project to enable the practical implementation of sustainable livelihoods approaches for poverty reduction.

## Some background to SL and Gender

Huge gender inequalities exist in many realms of life. Girls receive less formal education, and thus more women than men are illiterate and innumerate. The proportion of women in wage employment is far lower than for men, and their access to and control over income and assets is limited. Women are hugely under represented in policy and decision making fora, at all levels. It is estimated that around 30% of all households worldwide are female-headed – and these constitute some of the poorest (Beall and Kanji 1999). Women and girls are more susceptible to poverty and vulnerability than men. Thus it is important to consider gender issues to ensure that both women and men, girls and boys, have an equal opportunity to develop and sustain a fulfilling livelihood, free from poverty.

Over past decades, gender has increasingly been recognised as a critical issue in all aspects of development. Before then development interventions tended to be developed by men, with little concern for the particular needs of women, nor the impacts on them of such male focused interventions. In the 1970s, as it was realised that women were being left out of development, the pendulum swung towards singling out women's concerns and promoting targeted projects and policies to address them. By the early 1990s it became clear that relegating responsibility for gender issues to particular projects or departments was still marginalizing and isolating women from mainstream development. Gradually the emphasis shifted from a narrow "women in development" (WID) approach to a more dynamic "gender and development" (GAD) approach. GAD recognises the importance of understanding the different needs, roles and responsibilities of men and women, and their unequal positions in society. It aims to mainstream gender issues in all spheres of development, however considerable structural and cultural constraints still limit women and men's equal participation in the development process.

A sustainable livelihoods approach is a people centred approach to development that recognises the holistic and dynamic nature of poverty. It considers the multiple factors, from local, to regional and macro levels, that influence poor people's access to the skills and resources that permit them to make sustainable livelihood choices. For further background on Sustainable Livelihoods approaches, principles and framework, as applied by various agencies including DFID, Khanya, Oxfam, CARE, UNDP, etc., please visit Livelihoods Connect ([www.livelihoods.org](http://www.livelihoods.org)).

## The implications of gender within a Sustainable Livelihoods approach: Gender mainstreaming

### 1) Gender issues in sustainable livelihoods analysis

Analysing livelihoods only at the aggregate household level will overlook ways in which women and men, as well as girls and boys, experience poverty differently, and the different interests and strategies they pursue. Understanding these differences is critical in order to be able to develop proposals to support and strengthen the potential of both individuals within the household, and the household as a whole. Sex disaggregation of data collected in any SL analysis should be carried out to reveal patterns of gender difference and inequality, for example differences in schooling, in access to credit, or in participation in elections. Gender analysis is a more qualitative process of examining why the differences exist, whether they are a matter for concern, and how they might be addressed. It should form part of a routine SL analysis and monitoring, but will require deeper probing into the issues that lie behind gender difference.

Gender difference and gender relations are expressed in whole range of ways. As well as analysing individual and household strategies, it is important to consider the interrelationship and possible tensions between the two, for example the mutuality and dependence, as well as negotiating and bargaining between men and women within the household. Other areas of enquiry should include gender difference in organisations, institutions and policies, including budgets, at various levels, from the community to national level. Naturally, participation by both women and men is a central principal of any good analysis.

A number of gender analytical frameworks exist to guide the types of questions one might explore. The SL framework can also be adapted to provide such guidance, raising the following areas for exploration.

LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES <i>Existing livelihood strategies</i> <i>Desired livelihood outcomes</i>	Gender difference in existing roles of household members Priorities and strengths of men and women Desired livelihood outcomes of men and women
LIVELIHOOD ASSETS <i>Access to, and control over assets and opportunities</i>	Differential access to assets (natural assets, human, financial, social, physical) Differential control over assets
PIPS <i>Access to and influence over institutions and policy processes</i>	Gender bias in norms and informal institutions (social rules, customary law, etc) that govern access to/control over assets (e.g. land tenure, education, property rights and labour mobilisation) Gender bias in access to and representation by formal institutions (government, professions, education, business, etc) Gender impacts of policy, and gender representation in policy making processes. Implications at micro, meso and macro levels
VULNERABILITY CONTEXT <i>Factors that contribute to vulnerability</i>	Differential impacts of external shocks and stresses, such as seasonality, market prices trends, ill health or death in the household, conflict etc.

### 2) From analysis to action to promote gender equality

The purpose of gender analysis is not merely to understand the issues, but to ensure that gender equality is promoted within projects, programmes, policies and institutions. This does not mean that women and men, boys and girls need to be treated the same, but rather that all should have equal opportunity to a livelihood that is sustainable and fulfilling. Their needs, strengths and aspirations in this respect may well differ. Equality in choice and opportunity should be promoted.

A good gender analysis will provide a strong basis on which to ensure that proposed actions do not compromise gender equality, and to specify actions which promote equality. Clearly, specific actions will depend on the nature and context of the particular livelihoods programme.

Actions to promote gender equality can take several forms, e.g. addressing cultural or institutional barriers that exclude women or men from participation in activities intended for all; designing activities directed specifically at either women or men where appropriate; or helping men and women to work together. It is very important to ensure that project actions do not unintentionally have a negative or detrimental impact on women – hence gender impacts should be carefully monitored over time.

Many livelihoods interventions aim to increase the range of assets available to individuals or households, e.g. through measures to increase agricultural productivity (natural assets), provision of savings and credit schemes (financial assets), literacy, numeracy and health interventions (human assets); investments in housing and transport (physical); and support to organisational capacity and empowerment (social assets). Broadening the range of accessible assets expands the choice of livelihoods strategies, and is a key strategy for reducing vulnerability

However the differential access to and control over assets by women and by men is governed by informal and formal institutions, such as social norms, household power relations and customary law, as well as government policy and service provision, legal and financial institutions, and the private sector. These all operate at many levels from micro to macro. There are gender dimensions to the functioning of policies, institutions and processes that must be taken into consideration if change to promote gender equality is to be sustainable.

Thus, the principle of working holistically and at many levels, from the micro to macro, will help to highlight the importance of working not only directly with beneficiaries, but also to influence policies, organisations and institutions from the community to the national level which impact upon them in gender discriminatory ways. This can be done through strengthening the voice of women and advocates of gender equality to express their needs, concerns and demands. It can also be done by working directly with government, the private sector, the media and civil society to improve their capacity to respond to gender needs and to promote greater equality.

#### *Strengthening voice:*

Change in individual women's lives will not be sustained unless they are represented in decision making structures at all levels from community to national and international levels, and are able to influence the development agenda. Traditional attitudes towards women's participation, as well as their own work burden, and lack of knowledge, skills and confidence, often result in their exclusion from decision making. Women's involvement at a community level should be actively promoted in projects and programmes, and strategies to institutionalise their continued participation should be sought.

To ensure the right of women to participate and be heard at higher levels of decision making will require continuing advocacy by staff within donor agencies, NGOS and government. Strategies to pursue in this respect include:

- Supporting the capacity (financial and skills) of civil society groups committed to gender equality to engage with national policy processes, with the business community and with the media;
- Building networks and coalitions (including informal support networks and formal working parties) within and between organisations, to provide a supportive environment for advocates and facilitate sharing of ideas and experiences;
- Carrying out and disseminating participatory research and other advocacy studies to share the realities of women's livelihoods.

#### *Improving responsiveness:*

Demands will not achieve ends unless there is capacity among the relevant institutions to respond to demand:

- Developing the capacity of government, NGO and private sector staff to understand gender equality issues and to support gender-aware participatory consultation. Actions in support of organisational capacity building and change in support of gender mainstreaming are outlined in the following section;
- Influencing government to increase the range of spaces in which women can participate in the policy process, to make them more responsive;
- Supporting government and other institutions to carry out research and pilot programmes to better understand gender issues and how to address them;
- Working with the media to promote more appropriate gender messages.

For proposals to promote gender equality to be realistically translated into action and outcomes, they need to be prioritised and given serious attention. They need to be included in project logical frameworks and other key documents, specific resources and time need to be allocated, and indicators developed to ensure their implementation is monitored.

### 3) Organisational capacity building and change

A sustainable livelihoods approach presents various challenges for organisations in terms of the skills, capacity and new ways of working which it implies. Organisational capacity for gender mainstreaming is a key element within this broader challenge. Many governments, donors and NGOs have made policy commitments to gender equality, but such statements often “evaporate” in planning and implementation processes. Significant effort and resources are required to ensure that the necessary change in skills, attitudes and practice are understood and realised.

The organisational implications of gender mainstreaming are several, and are outlined in the following bullets:

- *Staff responsibility for gender:* thinking about gender should ideally be the responsibility of every member of staff. However, gender focal staff can take charge of spearheading supporting and sustaining gender-related work. Their role might include: promoting skills, knowledge and approaches; mobilising resources; seeking allies, and monitoring efforts for gender mainstreaming;
- *Gender policy:* a specific gender mainstreaming policy can be useful in the early stages of mainstreaming to ensure clarity of purpose, strategy and commitment. It should be well publicised and understood;
- *Gender training:* Appropriate skills will be needed for staff to be able to put the policy into practice. Gender training may cover a range of themes including raising awareness of the existence of gender differences; providing skills to ensure that gender difference is taken into account at all stages of the project/programming cycle; and sharing best practice;
- *Gender budgets:* financial resources needs to be attached to gender commitments, and gender perspectives need to be taken into account in budget formulation and allocation across the board.

## Key documents on LED

**DFID Gender and SRL Case Studies - KFSRE: Gender Issues in Developing Sustainable Livelihoods, Northern Namibia This case study draws on the work of the DFID funded Kavango Farming Systems Research and Extension (KFSR/E) team which was formed in 1995 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Development in Namibia.** The paper examines Kavango livelihoods using the Sustainable Livelihoods framework, and draws out key gender issues at each stage of analysis. The case-study concludes with some implications for mainstreaming gender issues in natural resource research and development in Kavango. [http://www.genie.ids.ac.uk/gemrecords/index\\_sectors/natural/nr\\_case8.asp](http://www.genie.ids.ac.uk/gemrecords/index_sectors/natural/nr_case8.asp) There are several other case studies and overviews from various sectors detailing relevant gender issues available via the Genie web search facility.

**Women in Transition Out of Poverty: An asset based approach to building sustainable livelihoods (2001) Women in Transition Out of Poverty - A guide to effective practice in promoting sustainable livelihoods through enterprise development (2002). Janet Murray; Mary Ferguson / WEDC /.** These two papers explore an asset-based approach to building sustainable livelihoods, based on experiences in a Northern context (Canada). The first paper draws on case studies of women who have participated in WECD programmes and applies sustainable livelihoods concepts. They develop an adapted asset framework that is more gender sensitive, and draw lessons from its application in the context of gender focused work. The second paper is a companion to the first. It investigates the connections between women’s stages of development and the design of economic development programmes. Practical strategies and tools are offered to support organisations in strengthening or implementing an SL approach in their work and discusses the policy and funding implications of the approach: [www.cdnwomen.org/eng/3share/WIT01/wit\\_eng.pdf](http://www.cdnwomen.org/eng/3share/WIT01/wit_eng.pdf) and [www.cdnwomen.org/eng/3share/WIT02/WIT02eng.pdf](http://www.cdnwomen.org/eng/3share/WIT02/WIT02eng.pdf)

**Gender Analysis for Sustainable Livelihoods: Frameworks, tools and links to other sources. Livelihoods Connect. 2002.** This short tool aims to briefly highlight the importance of gender analysis, and to suggest frameworks and tools to guide the practitioner in incorporating gender aspects into a livelihoods analysis. It outlines what is implied by gender analysis and why it is important. Links to various gender

analysis frameworks are detailed, and some practical tools are described. <http://www.livelihoods.org/info/tools/pas-GENDER.rtf>.

**DFID Gender Manual: A practical guide for development policy makers and practitioners. Helen Derbyshire. 2002.** This DFID manual aims to help non-gender specialists to recognise and address gender issues in their work. It is designed for DFID staff and partner organisations, but is relevant to many government and civil society organisations. It reviews the problems experienced to date with attempts to mainstream gender in national policy frameworks, and elaborates on practical tools and guidelines which build on emerging lessons of good practice. It can be accessed at: [http://62.189.42.51/DFIDstage/Pubs/files/gender\\_manual.pdf](http://62.189.42.51/DFIDstage/Pubs/files/gender_manual.pdf).

### Gender Analysis of Thematic Issues with Reference to SL

Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods: A Gender Perspective. R. Masika with S. Joekes – 1996

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/Reports/re37c.pdf>

The Gender-Energy-Poverty Nexus: Finding the energy to address gender concerns in development, by J. Clancy and M. Skutsch (no date): <http://www.sparknet.info/goto.php/view/21/file.asp>.

Migrants, livelihoods, and rights: The relevance of migration in Development policies. Arjan de Haan (2000)

[http://62.189.42.51/DFIDstage/Pubs/files/sdd\\_migwp4.pdf](http://62.189.42.51/DFIDstage/Pubs/files/sdd_migwp4.pdf).

Living with uncertainty: gender, livelihoods and pro-poor growth in sub-Saharan Africa. A. Whitehead and N. Kabeer. <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop/wp/wp134.pdf>.

## Useful Internet resources on LED

Livelihoods Connect: [www.livelihoods.org/cgi-bin/dbtcgi.exe](http://www.livelihoods.org/cgi-bin/dbtcgi.exe)

Bridge: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/index.aspl>.

Genie: Gender information exchange: <http://www.genie.ids.ac.uk/>

Siyanda: Mainstreaming Gender equality [www.siyanda.org/newadditions.asp](http://www.siyanda.org/newadditions.asp)

Unifem: UN Development Fund for Women - [http://www.unifem.org/index.php?f\\_page\\_pid=8](http://www.unifem.org/index.php?f_page_pid=8)

WIDNET: <http://www.focusintl.com/widnet.asp>

Eldis Gender Guide: <http://www.eldis.org/gender/index.asp>

Oxfam gender : <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/policy/gender/links.asp>

## SL activities/programmes

1. The roll-out (up-scaling) of Community-based planning has started in South Africa. This will be marked with pilots in eight Municipalities, in five provinces of Free State, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. For more information contact Ian Goldman at [goldman@khanya-mrc.co.za](mailto:goldman@khanya-mrc.co.za).
2. A revised international training calendar for 2003 of the International Institute of Rural Construction is now available on the IIRC website, [www.iirc.org](http://www.iirc.org). To learn more about the IIRC international courses contact them via e-mail at [Education & Training@iirr.org](mailto:Education&Training@iirr.org).

## Future topics

We welcome feedback, ideas and contributions for upcoming topics. Future topics will include the highlights of the Goodbye to Projects? project, grant-making and Artisanal Mining.

This month's newsletter was written by Kath Pasteur and the team from Livelihoods Connect. Livelihoods Connect is a learning project to enable the practical implementation of sustainable livelihoods approaches for poverty reduction. Livelihoods Connect encourages practitioners, policy makers and researchers to exchange comparative international experience and understanding of implementing SLAs. It does this by supporting knowledge sharing and networking. Please visit the site at: [www.livelihoods.org](http://www.livelihoods.org), or email the LC team at [livelihoods-connect@ids.ac.uk](mailto:livelihoods-connect@ids.ac.uk) for further information. The Kath Pasteur and the team from Livelihoods Connect would like to thank Janet Seeley for her helpful comments on an early draft.

*Sustaining Livelihoods in Southern Africa is an initiative of Khanya-managing rural change, and CARE. The editor is Tsiliso Tamasane and he can be contacted at [tsiliso@khanya-mrc.co.za](mailto:tsiliso@khanya-mrc.co.za), tel 082 499 5497. We welcome contributions, of events, relevant documents, comments etc.*

