
Sustaining Livelihoods in Southern Africa

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Theme: Institutional support for sustainable livelihoods

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Editor's notes

This month's edition looks at governance issues that are necessary to support sustainable livelihood efforts. In particular the edition analyse the six governance issues proposed by Khanya as critical if sustainable livelihoods are to be promoted. This newsletter draws from research work by Khanya-managing rural change in Southern and Central Africa. This is being used to provide background for a series of approaches to support local governance, which will be highlighted in other newsletters.

Brief background to sustainable livelihood approach

Edition 1 of the Sustaining Livelihoods in Southern Africa newsletter provided a short background to sustainable livelihood approaches. It discussed the SL framework, which describes the assets of poor people (physical, human, financial, natural and social), their vulnerabilities, preferred outcomes and livelihood strategies. There are also a set of principles which underlie the approach, and which should underlie how development is done.

Revised version of the SL Principles

Normative SL principles

- ***People-centred:* sustainable poverty elimination requires respect for human freedom and choice as well as an understanding of the differences between groups of people and recognition of the dynamic nature of livelihoods.**
- ***Empowering:* support should result in increased voice, opportunities and well-being for the poor.**
- ***Responsive and participatory:* poor people must be key actors in identifying and addressing livelihood priorities. Outsiders need processes that enable them to listen and respond to the poor.**
- ***Holistic:* we need to understand people's livelihoods and how these can be enhanced in a holistic way, which recognises the interrelationships between the different aspects of their**

lives, although actions arising from that understanding may be focused;

- ***Sustainable***: there are four key dimensions to sustainability – economic, institutional, social and environmental sustainability. All are important – a balance must be found between them.

Operational SL principles

- ***Strengths-based***: it is important to recognise and understand poor people's strengths, and not just their problems. This is respectful and provides a platform on which livelihood strategies can be developed;
- ***Multi-level (or micro-macro links)***: poverty elimination is an enormous challenge that will only be overcome by working at multiple levels. Micro-level activity should inform the development of policy and an effective governance environment. Macro- and meso-level structures and processes should support people to build upon their own strengths.
- ***Conducted in partnership***: partnerships can be formed with poor people and their organisations, as well as with the public and private sector. Partnerships should be transparent agreements based upon shared goals.
- ***Disaggregated***: it is vital to understand how the livelihoods of various disadvantaged groups differ – in terms of strengths, vulnerabilities and voice – and what effect this has. Stakeholder and gender analysis are key tools.
- ***Long-term and flexible***: poverty reduction requires long-term commitments and a flexible approach to providing support.

As can be seen these are essentially governance-related. The SL approach puts a holistic understanding of poor people at the centre, it recognises that policies and institutions condition the environment in which people work and the importance of the implications of policies and institutions on poverty-focussed processes or interventions.

The emphasis here is on the importance of linking local realities to central policies and institutions in SL development interventions. The notion of institutions and institutional support could be conceptualised to include: the organisations which influence people's lives, the services they receive, the policy environment, the incentives available, whether overt such as grants, or covert such as unwritten power relations, and the rules of the game which govern people's lives.

Key institutional issues arising

In 1999-2000 Khanya-managing rural change, supported by DfID, undertook research in Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa. The research work focused on institutional support for sustainable rural livelihoods in these Southern African countries, that is, the changes needed to policies, institutions and processes to promote sustainable rural livelihoods.

The findings highlighted the importance of the link between micro-macro levels of governance. Table 1 below, suggests how these levels can be defined.

Table 1 Meaning of micro-meso-macro

Level	Function
Micro	Community level – where people live
Lower meso	Lowest level of management of service delivery (typically that of local government)
Upper meso	Intermediate level, which provides support to and supervision of the lower meso, often a province or region

Macro	Policy level, usually national, but in federal states, also at state level
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Some findings were:

At micro level:

- there are no participatory planning systems which systematically link people with local government, and so local, and particularly, poor people have little influence on the resource allocation system;
- At village level in many countries service provision is weak and generally includes only primary schools, sometimes clinics and veterinary services, and occasionally agricultural extension. In general the investment in government does not permeate to the village;

At meso level:

- decentralisation is still very weak in many countries. There are models of how this can work, eg in Uganda. Even in these countries that are decentralising, the link between the district and village is weak, with at the best local shopping lists being used to provide information for local government planning;
- the role of the upper meso level is often neglected which can lead to very inadequate supervision and a confusion in roles (eg in Tanzania), and a problem of how to provide specialist support;

At macro level:

- co-ordination at central level is always complex and difficult;
- there is often no clear strategy for addressing poverty (eg in South Africa), although PRSPs do provide this opportunity;
- often there is little mechanism for redistribution to provide real opportunities for poor people, and a social grant mechanism is the only mechanism provided as a safety-net.

Arising from this study, a set of critical issues were identified by Khanya at each of these micro-macro levels if SLs are to be promoted. For more details see a final report by Khanya on 'Institutional Support for Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa' Khanya, April 2000 which can be obtained from www.khanya-mrc.co.za . These include:

Micro level

- i. poor people should be active and involved in managing their development (claiming their rights and exercising their responsibilities);
- ii. there needs to be a responsive, active and accessible network of local service providers (whether community-based, private sector or government);

Meso level

- iii. at local government level (lower meso) services must be facilitated, provided or promoted effectively and responsively, coordinated and held accountable;
- iv. there needs to be a regional/provincial (upper meso) level, providing support supervision of the lower meso, and possible a strategic level for planning;

Macro levels

- v. the centre (province/national) needs to provide strategic direction, redistribution and oversight;
- vi. international institutions and processes must help promote the capacity of nation states to

take on the strategic roles to eradicate poverty.

These six governance issues help to illustrate how SL principles can help in understanding and addressing power relations. What is also critical is suitable links between these levels. What these illustrate is the importance of linking local realities to central policies and institutions in livelihood interventions. This list can be used as a checklist in design or evaluation, to see if appropriate conditions exist to promote sustainable livelihoods.

Implications of these governance issues on governments and NGOs

Implications for implementing the six governance questions are explored in the table below. The comparison is made between the governments and non-governmental organisations.

Governance issues	Governments	NGOs
<p>Micro level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor people active and involved • responsive, active and accessible network of local service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • should create enabling environment for participation • provide guidance for effective and responsive service delivery, and emphasise local level delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • skills can be used to mobilise communities for active participation • can empower communities to demand services and accountability from service providers, and test out service models
<p>Meso level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • services facilitated, provided or promoted effectively and responsively, co-ordinated and held accountable • the region/province supportive and supervising the lower meso 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local governments should involve communities in service delivery, provide accountability mechanisms • regular monitoring and evaluation of service delivery should be conducted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs should where possible align their programmes with those of the local governments, and seek for sustainable delivery mechanisms
<p>Macro levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the centre providing strategic direction, redistribution and oversight • international institutions and processes helping to promote the capacity of nation states to take on the strategic roles to eradicate poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • central governments should decentralise power, while providing strategic direction to regions • rather than by-passing weak governments, international institutions should work with them to build their capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • international and national NGOs should work with national governments to seek to influence policy based on experience at micro level <p>international NGOs should work with national governments to build capacity of national NGOs and governments</p>

Key lines of work

Some interesting initiatives are attempting to address these issues, for example:

- it led to a four country action research on community-based planning with pilots being conducted in Uganda, Ghana, Zimbabwe and South Africa, which specifically seeks to promote peoples participation in resource allocation, and being active in planning and managing their development. This project was highlighted thoroughly in 2nd Edition of Sustaining Livelihoods in Southern Africa. (see material on this project at www.khanya-mrc.co.za).
- work looking at community-based services, such as community-based workers. Khanya is working with CARE and others partners looking at how community workers such as home-based care givers, paravets, etc can be used as viable model of service delivery. A recent symposium was organised by CARE and Khanya on this topic, of which details are below and this will be discussed further in the next SLSA newsletter

Key documents on SLs and governance

Livelihoods Approaches Compared: A Multi-Agency Review of Current Practices. DfID & ODI. London (October 2002). Compiled by Karim Hussein (ODI). The publication has been commissioned by the Overseas Development Institute and provides an invaluable comparative view of current understandings and use of SL approach by various organisations. It also updates the picture for those organisations that were already using the SL. Moreover, the publication provides a clear guide, with numerous examples, to the way the SL has recently been thought about and applied by bilateral donors, multilateral agencies, NGOs and governments. Contact Allison Chapman more information at livelihoods@dfid.gov.uk.

Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches: Progress and Possibilities for Change. Department for International Development (DFID) 2002. Diana Carney. This document summarises current thinking from a variety of sources as part of a broad DFID supported effort to share experience with and learning about SL. It pays particular attention to the issue of rights and power relations, seeking ways to increase SL users' focus on these key development concerns. It summarises the debate about rights based approaches and SL and suggests how to maximise the contribution to poverty reduction of both sets of ideas. It looks at access to assets and how these relate to people's ability to demand their rights as well as how governance and institutional factors affect the supply of rights. Diana Carney can be contacted at 15 Killarney Road, Toronto, Ontario M5P 1L7, Canada, e-mail: d.carney@rogers.com, Alison Chapman at livelihoods@dfid.gov.uk

Institutional Support for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods in Southern Africa: Results from Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. ODI, Natural resources Perspectives, Number 50, March 2000. This paper reports on the work mentioned above which was carried out with partners in Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa by Khanya-managing rural change and funded by UK's Department for International Development. It summarises the key findings from four case study countries according to levels of support and action, types of organisation, policy issues and the process of managing change to promote SLs.

The final report of the project is **Institutional Support for Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa: Final Report.** Khanya-managing rural change. April 2000, which provides a generic overview and findings across all study sides. Individual case study reports for each country are also available on the website. For more information visit www.khanya-mrc.co.za contact Ian Goldman at goldman@khanya-mrc.co.za or Tsiliso Tamasane at tsiliso@khanya-mrc.co.za.

Useful Internet resources on SLs and governance

1. Khanya-managing rural change community-based planning page: www.khanya-mrc.co.za
2. Bradford Centre for International Development: www.brad.ac.uk/acad/ddpc/goodbye.html.
3. DFID SL site www.livelihoods.org/info/doc/sl
4. UNDP SL site www.undp.org/dpa/publications/governance.html.
5. Key Sheets for sustainable livelihoods: www.keysheets.org/red_11_decentr_gov/
6. Overseas Development Institute: www.odi.org.uk/nrp/index

SL activities/programmes and events

1. The Intermediate Technology and Development Group: Southern Africa in partnership with Zimbabwe's Ministry of Local Government and Development Planning, and Gwanda district Municipality held a national workshop on community-based planning on 22-23 January 2003 in Harare. For information contact Absolom Masendeke at absolomm@itdg.org.zw.
2. The Institute for Development Policy and Management at the University of Manchester and the Development Policy and Practice Discipline of the Open University are hosting a workshop on Participation: from tyranny to transformation? Exploring New Approaches to Participation in Development. This will be held at the University of Manchester from 27-28 February 2003. For details contact Email: sam.hickey@man.ac.uk Tel: +44 161 275 2806.
3. On the research project 'Goodbye to Project: The Institutional Impacts of Livelihood Approach on Development Interventions' will have a workshop in Uganda on March 17th to share learning and experiences. This is a DFID-funded project that looks at how sustainable livelihoods approach are actually being used in a range of development interventions, and aims to identify and clarify challenges to the design, appraisal and implementation of development interventions and changes required from the adoption of a livelihoods approach. For more information on the project visit www.brad.ac.uk/acad/dppc/goodbye.html or contact Anna Toner at A.L.Toner@Bradford.ac.za or Tsiliso Tamasane at tsiliso@khanya-mrc.co.za
4. Rhodes University is running a training course on resource and environmental economics. The training course is scheduled for 11-13 March 2003. For information contact Big Tree Project Support at BigTree@intekom.co.za , tel/fax 046 622 6242.
5. ISODEC together with the Ministry of Local Government and Planning is planning to hold a community-based planning workshop in Ghana in April 2003. For more information contact Ernest Tay Awoosah at tay@isodec.org.gh.

Future topics

We welcome feedback, ideas and contributions for upcoming topics. Future topics will include Artisanal Mining, Community-based service delivery, a follow-up edition on Community-based Planning and Community-Based Natural Resource Management.

Sustaining Livelihoods in Southern Africa is an initiative of Khanya-managing rural change, PLAAS of the University of the Western CAPE, and CARE. The editor is Tsiliso Tamasane and he can be contacted at tsiliso@khanya-mrc.co.za, tel 082 499 5497. Previous newsletters are available at the Khanya website, www.khanya-mrc.co.za. We welcome contributions, of events, relevant documents, comments etc.

 Tsiliso Tamasane
 Khanya - managing rural change cc
 17 James Scott Street, Brandwag, 9301
 Republic South Africa, Tel: +27 (0) 51 430 0712
 Fax: +27 (0) 51 430 8322, Cell: +27 (0) 82 499 5497
 E-mail: tsiliso@khanya-mrc.co.za, Web: <http://www.khanya-mrc.co.za/>