Human Rights and Livelihood Approaches for Poverty Reduction

Briefing Note

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1. Introduction

Poverty is now understood as being multidimensional and as referring to the lack of the basic capabilities (economic, human, political, socio-cultural and protective) and conditions needed for living in dignity (OECD, 2001). SDC sees poverty as resulting in discrimination, obstacles and exclusion in satisfying the basic necessities of life; in the use and development of individual's physical and human potential, capacities and creativity; in seizing the opportunities and choices for fashioning a fulfilling and dignified life; in the realisation of one's aspirations; and from participating in the formulation and decision-making stages of the social, political and economic transformation process (SDC, 2004).

The multidimensionality of poverty informs not only efforts to understand and analyse poverty but also, crucially, the development and operationalisation of interventions to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development. Several approaches have been developed to address the challenges posed by this, including sustainable livelihoods approaches (SLAs) and human rights-based approaches (HRBAs). These have gained wide recognition among development practitioners and researchers.

Despite some areas of overlap in the founding principles, HRBA and SLA have different roots, starting points and underlying assumptions (Pasteur & Shankland, 2002). The two approaches also seek to address different kinds of problems or challenges. As such, simply merging the two is not necessarily desirable, or appropriate. However, building on respective strengths, it is possible to identify specific circumstances where combining the two approaches may be beneficial.

This briefing paper maps the key features of the two approaches and their foundation, content and contribution to analysing poverty in specific contexts, also identifying operational entry points (Section 2). In Section 3 the two approaches are compared, with synergies identified as well as differences. Section 4 then provides some ideas on how the two approaches could be combined, and what could be gained from such a two-pronged approach. Section 5 pulls together some of the most relevant issues and makes initial recommendations for the reader.

2. SLAs and HRBAs: conceptual approaches and key features

2.1. The sustainable livelihoods approach

a) Origins and objectives

The sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF, see Ludi & Slater, 2007) is rooted in paradigm shifts in (rural) development through the 1980s and 1990s towards a focus on human wellbeing and sustainability rather than just economic growth. Its key objective is to increase the sustainability of poor people's livelihoods by strengthening their assets to respond to opportunities and risks, minimise vulnerability and maintaining, smoothing or improving well-being. Sustainable livelihood approaches (SLA) put people at the centre of development and highlight their strengths rather than their needs. They provide a structure for coherent analysis of livelihoods, risk, vulnerability and poverty, and the design of people-centred development and poverty reduction policies, programmes and projects, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable. SLA are flexible and can be adapted to meet specific needs, by, for example, focusing more on specific aspects than others, but without losing sight of the wider picture. They also provide

useful tools to incorporate poverty issues into other thematic foci. SLAs foster a multi-dimensional approach to poverty analysis and reduction, and can be used to analyse how interventions tackle the non-material dimensions of poverty, contribute to strengthening a household's asset portfolio, enhancing their livelihood options and enhancing their well-being (Ludi & Slater, 2007).

b) Key features

The SLA puts **people at the centre of development.** Individuals/households draw on their assets to respond to opportunities and risks, minimising vulnerability and maintaining or improving wellbeing by adopting livelihood strategies. The SLA highlights that assets are not just financial or physical assets, but also includes natural, social and human. Political assets have recently been added to the framework ('asset hexagon').

Individuals and households are **embedded** in a specific context made up of i) exposure to risks and opportunities, and ii) access to services and policies, institutions, organisations, processes and structures (PIOPS) (see Figure 1). These influence the way in which a combination of assets can be used to develop a particular livelihood activity strategy. Increasingly, development activities focus on transforming structures at different levels, from the household to the international arena. The manner in which these reformed structures influence livelihood options and outcomes is mediated by a range of transforming institutions and processes operating at multiple levels (Ludi & Slater, 2007).

Figure 1: The sustainable livelihoods framework
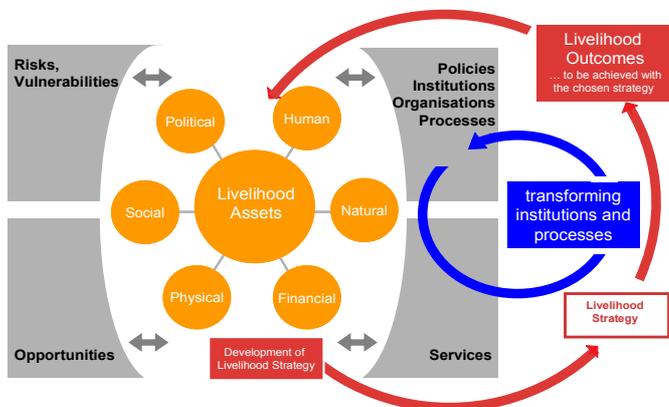
Source: SDC

The SLA is **holistic**, recognising that people's livelihood strategies depend on a range of assets and capabilities and their interactions, and on the specific context in which they are embedded. Applying a holistic livelihood approach to poverty reduction enables opening up more traditional sectoral approaches, it recognises multiple influences on people and seeks to understand the relationships between them, it acknowledges the multiple livelihood strategies people adopt, and supports multiple livelihood outcomes.

Although SLAs focus strongly on the micro level, they do not neglect specific **contextual settings**. They encourage an examination of risks and vulnerability and of structures and processes at various levels. Understanding contexts is important for pro-poor policy: it helps us to understand

strategies open to the poor. It also can help illuminate likely impacts that different policies will have on particular groups of people living in poverty.

c) Implications for programming

Such a broad poverty analysis does not imply a similarly broad development approach. The SLA can help in pragmatically prioritising entry points and enables agencies to develop flexible and locally appropriate responses to risk, vulnerability and poverty and can provide the evidence and analysis necessary for the **prioritised and strategic selection of interventions** at multiple levels. Entry points for poverty relevant development measures can be related to (i) promoting and implementing poverty oriented policies, (ii) initiating and supporting pro-poor institutional change, (iii) enhancing the capabilities of poor people, (iv) facilitating access to existing opportunities, and (v) reducing exposure to risks and reducing poor people's vulnerabilities (NADEL & SDC, 2007). Its people-focused nature means that the basic measure of success of interventions is the extent to which individuals, households or communities have been enabled to strengthen sustainable livelihoods for themselves.

2.2. The human rights-based approach

a) Origins and objectives

The HRBA has its foundation in the normative framework of international human rights standards and principles, and the protection and promotion of these. States, as primary **duty bearers**, are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights entitlements of individuals, or **rights holders**. In line with the UN Common Understanding of a human rights-based approach, SDC policy on HRBA is based on the following three key elements: 1) use of the international human rights framework as a reference, 2) integration of the human rights principles: equality and non-discrimination; participation and empowerment; accountability and rule of law; indivisibility and universality (see Box 1). These principles are not only important for the development process, but also as objectives of development. And 3) address both the rights-holders and the duty-bearers with respect to rights and duties (see Figure 2 below).

Box 1: Principles of the HRBA

- **Equality and non-discrimination**: Policies, programmes and practices will not, intentionally or unintentionally, reinforce social, political or economic inequalities. On the contrary, they will consciously aim at promoting equality and non-discrimination.

- **Participation and empowerment**: Activities will aim at empowering people to participate fully in decision-making processes that affect their lives – and at making state institutions capable of responding to the opinions expressed and of balancing conflicting interests in ways which conform to human rights.

- **Accountability and the rule of law**: Human rights link participation and empowerment of rights-holders with the responsibilities of state authorities to respect, protect and fulfil their human rights duties. SDC will particularly strengthen accountability mechanisms at the national and local level.

- **Indivisibility and universality**: All human rights belong to all, and no set of rights is superior to another. The realisation of one right often depends essentially on other interlinked rights. Though policy making requires the prioritisation/ sequencing of certain objectives and human rights must be realised progressively.

Source: Adapted from SDC (2006).

b) Key features

The application of the principles entails a **holistic** approach, for both rights holders (individuals, families, communities, etc.) and duty bearers (primarily state institutions at all levels) to actively participate in transforming power systems at all stages of the policy formulation process.

The strengths of the HRBA are to be noted in the building of **empowerment** and **sustainability** of both rights holders as well as of duty bearers avoiding the creation of parallel structures dependant on donors' resources in the long term.

At the same time, **human rights standards** allow for comprehensive situational analysis and set conditions for implementation and monitoring. This is all the more important given that all States have ratified at least one of the Human Rights Conventions.

Figure 2: The human rights framework
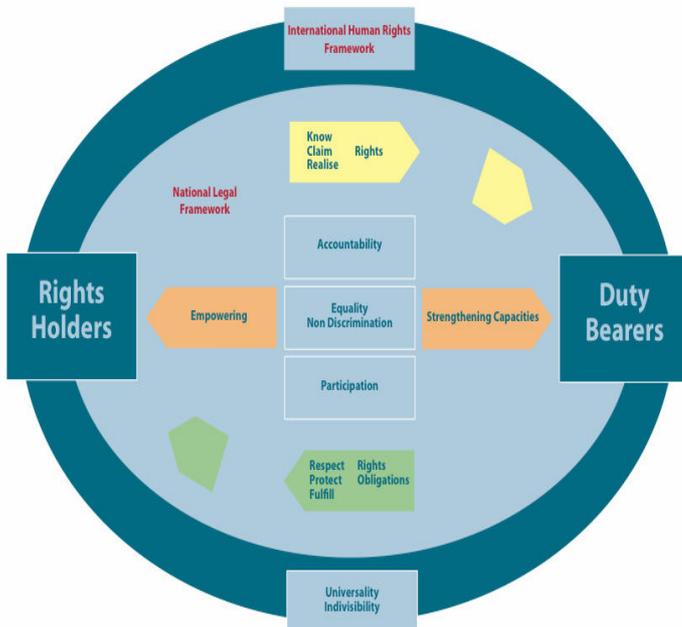
Source: SDC

A HRBA appreciates that it is not possible to carry out development without **dealing with imbalances in power**, a situation which is often highly political. The HRBA aims to redress discriminatory practices embedded in national systems and practices towards the realisation of human rights. At the same time, there is a focus on **national and citizens based ownership and accountability**, consistent with the principles of aid effectiveness as outlined in the Paris Declaration.

Since the Vienna Conference on Human Rights in 1993, the intrinsic values and universal principles of human rights are increasingly recognised and the realisation of human rights is considered as a key component of sustainable human development outcomes, such as the MDGs or poverty reduction

c) Implications for programming

Evidence gathered on the need for human rights in development has led to recognition that a HRBA can be used to enhance projects and programming by **building on other development practices and by creating new synergies and alliances among different actors.** For example, a HRBA to girls' education not only looks at education itself, but also at transforming discriminatory systems of power, particularly through participation of the target group rights holders themselves.

The transformation of existing distributions of power is a main way in which a HRBA brings **value-added**, through an integrated approach towards all development issues. This, combined with the internationally agreed and legitimate normative framework, makes a HRBA to development a unique opportunity for the international community to harmonise interventions around a commonly agreed set of standards and principles.

3.   Synergies and discrepancies

3.1.   Common features of the two approaches

Despite different roots, SLA and HRBA founding principles see considerable overlap, prioritising influencing policies, institutions and processes in ways that enable poor people to achieve better access to entitlements and resources (Farrington, 2001). In doing so, they link specific rights to capabilities and assets of poor people. Common features include the following:

- They are **people-centred**: individuals or households are at the centre of analysis. The SLA focuses more on strategies and livelihood outcomes, achievable in a given vulnerability context and with a given asset and capability portfolio. The HRBA is concerned with individual's and people's entitlements, including the rights necessary for accessing assets and for achieving specific outcomes.

- They seek to **empower** poor people**.** Participation in decision making is seen as vital for empowerment and vice-versa. At the same time, both approaches aim at drawing attention to the fact that even the very poorest and most vulnerable people have capabilities or assets on which poverty reduction interventions can build on. Both approaches can contribute to the poor being viewed as agents of change rather than the beneficiaries. For further analysis of empowerment in relation to both SLA and HRBA see Luttrell et al. (2007).

- They are **holistic** in the sense that they encourage analysis of the context – natural, social, cultural, political and economic – in which people are trying to make a living and recognise the multiple opportunities and risks

people are facing. They emphasise identification of constraints in various domains and at various levels and seek to identify ways of overcoming these.

- They **link** micro realities with developments at the macro level. Analysis of national and international policies and processes leads to a better understanding how these influence livelihood strategies and outcomes and how they should be adapted in order to achieve the goal of poverty reduction.

3.2. Main gaps/blind spots of the approaches

One major criticism of SLAs has been that they have not highlighted rights and **power** sufficiently. Furthermore, **differentiation within societies** has often been made insufficiently explicit. Such social differentiation can be along gender, class, ethnicity or creed lines. Important differentiations also exist within households, which can be significant with regard to access to assets or the way different household members are exposed to different risks. By disaggregating households and societies, different interests – and resulting conflicts – and power relations can be made more explicit. The SLA has often been presented in a rather **ahistorical** and culturally unspecific way. Historical experiences and culture are important in shaping people's livelihood strategies, aspirations or conceptualisations of their roles, their rights and their responsibilities. Early versions of SL frameworks paid insufficient attention to explore how decisions are made within a household or a society; how societies deal with conflicting interests; how sustainability is negotiated, for whom and for how long; why specific institutions limiting access to assets for the poor have evolved and are maintained; or why different social groups are excluded from access to certain assets. These issues have been addressed by the recent addition of political assets to the framework and a more focused analysis of the role policies, institutions, organisations and processes play in shaping the context in which poor people try to make a living. Other adaptations of the framework put specific emphasis on decision making and factors in the historical, cultural, political, and economic sphere influencing this. (see   www.poverty-wellbeing.net/media/sla/index.htm   for one such enhanced SL framework).

For the HRBA, according to Moser & Norton (2001), a major limitation regards the **lack of a mechanism for the prioritisation** of actions towards sustainable development. This lack of a hierarchy means that those implementing human rights interventions may find it difficult to prioritise rights or to trade off between rights. This can lead to soft or aspirational decision making.

HRBA are often perceived as being too strongly relaying on the state as the primary duty bearer with obligations to fulfil human rights. This could entail two kinds of risks: first, that the role of individuals and groups as agents of development could be underestimated. Secondly that HRBA could be seen as difficult to implement when the state is weak (e.g. in fragile states) or when formal legal and institutional structures are too under resourced to fulfil their obligations. However, a key feature of HRBA is that it has the potential of addressing customary and informal power bases, and to challenge them when they are not

respecting human rights. Furthermore, the universality of human rights ensures equality among all individuals, including refugees and migrants, who are often among the most vulnerable given their lack of citizenship or legal status.

A focus on human rights can cause resentment in national governments, as they are inherently **political**. Despite the increasing recognition of the political dimension of development cooperation, and the potential for human rights to address the power imbalances which characterise poverty, there have been criticisms in the past that human rights standards represent external conditionality. It is essential to clarify human rights initiatives with participating actors before implementation. Further weaknesses have been identified as: 'the emphasis on human rights violations in the present, rather than balancing benefits over time [and] the difficulty of negotiating with other (non legal) frameworks' (Archer, 2005).

3.3. When to integrate and when not to integrate SLA and HRBAs?

It is important to recognise that, as explained in Section 1, SLAs and HRBAs can be concerned with different kinds of challenges and can deal with different kinds of priorities. Therefore, it may not always be desirable or possible to combine the two approaches. Furthermore, a great deal will depend on the specific context of the areas in which programmes are being developed: in some cases, the context can be conducive to a combined SLA/HRBA approach; in others, it may be better to keep them separate, to use different entry points or to engage in a dialogue with different actors.

Below, we identify some of the key reasons in support of a combination of SLAs and HRBAs, as well as some of the limitations.

- **To reduce social and political risk**. A combined rights and livelihoods perspective in the logic of this scenario is that a rights/livelihoods perspective in policy implementation leads to enhanced social justice, through the application of the principle of non-discrimination and the emphasis on 'equitable accountability' of the state to all citizens. This in turn increases social sustainability through the reduction of social risk (lesser incidence of political and social risks and shocks, especially conflict). This strengthens the long-term security of livelihoods (especially of poor people who are less able to avoid and cope with the impacts of civil conflict), and the sustainable realisation of economic and social rights (Moser & Norton, 2001).

- **To strengthen the institutional framework and enhance long-term livelihood sustainability**. Ensuring that policy making and institution building reflect human rights standards and principles can contribute to creating stronger, more equitable and accountable public, civil and community institutions, which in turn increases the capacity to prepare for, and cope with, shocks and make use of opportunities.

These are, of course, vital elements of a long-term commitment to sustainable livelihoods, as addressed by SLAs.

- To point out that **people are agents of change** rather than beneficiaries. Whereas the HRBA focuses more strongly on relationships between public institutions (at various levels) and civil society, and how to make public institutions accountable to all citizens, the SLA focuses more on the constraints that prevent people from realising rights which are a prerequisite for promoting livelihoods. Supporting people (rights holders) by increasing their assets to claim their rights is only one side of the coin. Strengthening authorities and public institutions (duty bearers) to meet their obligations is the other side.

Figure 4 diagram below highlights the relationship between a culture of rights and long-term livelihood sustainability. In particular it highlights how adopting a human rights framework to the development of policy for livelihoods (A) can in turn lead to more equitable institutions (B), improved capacity to manage risk (C) and, in the long term, to enhanced livelihood sustainability (D).

Figure 4: The relationship between human rights and long term sustainable livelihoods
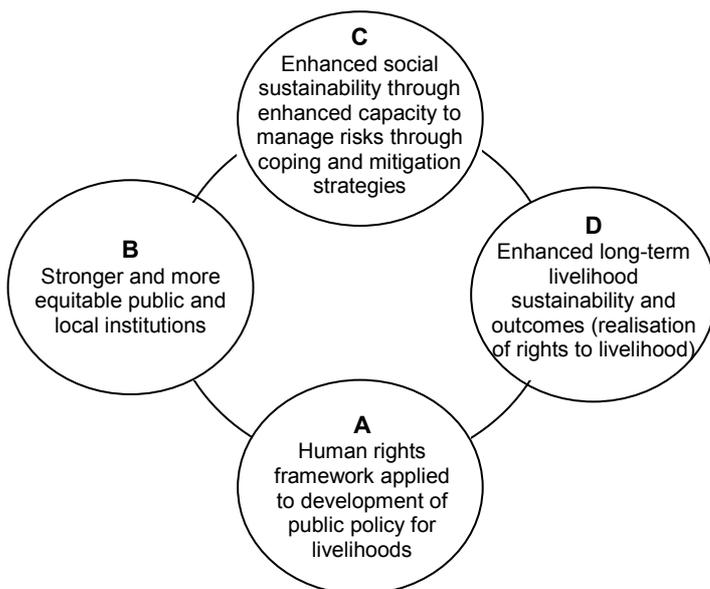
Source: adapted from Moser & Norton (2001).

- **To strengthen and improve situation/context analysis**. SLAs appear to be specifically appropriate in terms of understanding and analysing present livelihood situations of the poor and the contexts in which they are living. It is a powerful tool for identifying key drivers of poverty, the factors that push people into poverty, and the factors that can provide pathways out of poverty. A HRBA can allow for strengthening of this analysis by ensuring that such analysis takes into account the various situations of different groups, the relations between them and their

rights and responsibilities towards each other, specifically the most marginalised, and in so doing it links issue of power with discrimination. In addition, the HRBA can bring to the fore issues which are related to power structures and relations. Finally, they are able to ensure that this analysis not only is focused on the situations of individual households or communities, but also will integrate responsibility analysis and mapping, which would allow the identification of the specific institutions accountable for such situations.

- **To identify multiple entry points for programming**. At the design stage of programmes or projects, SLAs are able to help in directly relating project/programme outputs with improved livelihood outcomes. They can also help in prioritising strategic entry points at various levels (e.g. influencing policies and institutions, enhancing assets and capacities, facilitating access to opportunities, or reducing risks). A HRBA can complement this analysis by relating such outputs and livelihood outcomes to specific rights which need to be addressed and improved (e.g. a right to water, a decent standard of living, etc.). By identifying the key assets of the poor, the related potential opportunities, and the specific rights and entitlements that the poor are entitled to claim, SLAs and HRBAs can help in identifying the different possible entry points for maximising the programme/project impact. Specific entry points can then be prioritised through negotiation with partners at various levels and with primary stakeholders.

Some of the limitations and risks entailed in combining SLAs and HRBAs include the following:

- In **political sensitive contexts,** integrating human rights and livelihood approaches might be problematic as it might create antagonism by powerful elites who feel threatened by the rights language and its implications. In some cases, it can even expose people to risks or further discrimination.

- **Language and cultural issues**: in some contexts, the language of human rights can be off-putting, particularly when it is assumed to be used in relation to donor conditionalities (Uvin, 2005). However it should be noted that a strategic use of terminology has been successfully applied to introduce human rights issues even in the most culturally and politically sensitive environments (e.g. by Action Aid in Vietnam)

- **HRBAs could weaken the focus of SLA interventions**, particularly when these are planned in a very specific area, or focus on very specific assets or resources within a small group of households. There is a concern that human rights are too abstract and not always easy to apply in very specific circumstances or for concrete problems such as assets management. However human rights have also proven to be very useful tools for development practice, which could help to rebalance the often too narrow focus of SLAs.

Table 1: SLAs and HRBAs: a comparison

	Sustainable livelihood approaches (SLA)	Human rights-based approaches (HRBA)
Principles	• People-centred • Holistic • Dynamic & flexible • Sustainability • Participation and empowerment	• Equality and non-discrimination; • Participation and inclusion; • Accountability and rule of law; • Indivisibility and universality
Overall approach	• People are social actors and agents of change	• People are active citizens with rights, expectations, and responsibilities • Poverty is related to voicelessness; poverty alleviation is not a matter of charity, but one of individual's rights and entitlements
Entry Points	• Identification of risks and opportunities poor people face • Analysis of how people use assets to develop livelihood strategies (i.e. preventive, mitigating and coping strategies) • Can be at multiple levels and consider micro-macro links	• Normative and legitimate international framework, and its integration in national framework • Focus on both rights holders and duty bearers • Alliances and partnerships • Long-term and integrated • Micro-macro linkages
Implications for programming	• Identifying people's strengths (based on material and non-material assets) and building on these, not on their needs • Analysing the context in which people try to make a living (vulnerability and risks; opportunities; policies, institutions, organisations, processes; services) • Identifying entry points (for strengthening assets/reducing vulnerability/exposure to risks) at various levels and in various sectors	• Understanding concept of human rights and relation to other rights • Understanding state obligation in different contexts and role of state • Identifying rights holders at different levels, strengthening rights in participatory manner • Disaggregating different groups in communities, aiming at the most marginalised
Strengths	• People-centred development • Multi-dimensional poverty understanding • Address the whole range of policy issues relevant to the poor • Emphasise sustainability (social, economic, environmental) • Strong on micro-level analysis of drivers and maintainers of poverty	• Valuable strategic entry point into how power imbalances deny access to rights • Strengthen accountability to deal with human rights issues • Allow for sustainability through accountability of duty bearers and empowerment of right holders • Explicit focus on the most marginalised/ vulnerable groups.
Weaknesses	• Power relations are not made explicit enough • Ahistorical and culturally unspecific • Social differentiation within societies not sufficiently emphasised • Descriptive, i.e. do not adequately address fundamental questions of 'how' and 'why' • Macro-micro policy linkages not well conceptualised	• Lack of 'hierarchy of rights' makes it difficult to prioritise action • Emphasis on state-citizen relationship can detract attention from other forms of control • 'Political' nature of human rights makes it difficult for some donors to adopt the approach • Issue of management of natural resources is not adequately addressed (see Box 4)

4. How to combine the SLA and the HRBA and what can be gained by this

4.1. Context analysis

There is considerable scope for combining SLAs and HRBAs for poverty analysis and to identify poverty reduction interventions at multiple levels, from local to international. Combination can be justified by analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches as outlined in Table 1. While SLAs focus on people and their assets and capabilities and how they enable people to respond to opportunities and risks and minimise vulnerability, on multiple livelihood strategies and outcomes, on the role of policies, institutions and organisations in shaping livelihood strategies and generally in identifying drivers, maintainers and interrupters of poverty at multiple levels, they are less well adapted to analysing and understanding power relations and the ways in which these contribute to the production, and reproduction, of poverty.

In contrast, a rights perspective provides a robust framework for examining key aspects of power relations influencing people's capacities, rights and responsibilities. HRBAs are helpful in analysing processes by which claims are made and gain legitimacy, and thus assist in identifying the operation and structure of power (Moser & Norton, 2001). HRBAs are also instrumental when focusing on underlying causes of poverty and gaining a better understanding of different actors and their roles in terms of right holding and duty bearing.

Box 4: Right to water: constraints to interventions

Increasingly, water scarcity is attributed to political and socioeconomic processes denying people entitlements to water rather than physical scarcity as such. There is growing recognition that access to water is a fundamental right, and that governments must uphold their duty to ensure that water is accessible and affordable by all. South Africa is the only country that constitutionally recognises the human right to water: in 2001, the government announced that it was going to provide a basic supply of 25 litres of safe drinking water per person free of charge, mainly for personal and domestic purposes.

Do enforceable social and economic rights make a difference to people's lives and livelihoods? The case of Eastern Cape, South Africa, shows that a human right to water has definitely contributed to welfare improvements such as time savings in collecting water and clear health benefits. However, a human right to water in itself is not enough to radically redistribute resources. A number of implementation challenges were identified mainly related to insufficient financial and human capacities at the municipal level. Additionally, amounts of available water in some localities limited free water delivery. Furthermore, the right to free water only concerns a basic supply of 25 litres mainly for personal and domestic purposes, but does not include a right to water for agricultural production, which would be necessary to significantly improve production and contribute to poverty reduction.

Sources: DFID (1999-2005); Newborne (2004); Mehta & Ntshona (2004); UNDP (2006).

HRBAs are helpful in unpacking PIOPS factors in the livelihoods framework by contributing to address governance issues. It is important to consider different conceptions of power, including formal and informal codes and formal and informal mechanisms. In many societies, particularly in rural areas, local informal dispute settlement is based on social norms, practices and procedures which may not be recognised by the formal legal system. Different layers of norms and authority interact, are often associated with specific structures of authority (kinship elders, local elites, political leaders, etc). Rights defined at one level may be denied because of rules and norms at another. For example, national statutory codes may stipulate that women have the same rights to inheritance as men, while local institutions and norms deny them these.

In some countries, 'traditional authorities' and customary law have been recognised by the central state, which has delegated certain tasks to be handled through them. This offers opportunities, as societal norms and local realities are better reflected. However, there is a danger of elite capture and insufficient accountability of such informal structures. In these cases a focus solely on a HRBA may not take into account micro realities in contextual analysis, which could be addressed by combining it with an SLA.

A specific strength of SLAs is that they incorporate the notion of **sustainability** in all dimensions, encompassing such elements as renewable natural resources and socioeconomic resilience to external shocks. A SLA lens can draw attention to aspects critical to sustainability. As rural livelihoods are often based on natural resources, it is essential to focus on the way natural resources are managed and used, and by whom. SLAs can also help in identifying interests of different stakeholders and can be helpful in balancing interests between current and future generations in view of deciding how natural resources should be used and managed. SLAs can be instrumental in identifying entry points at very specific and often highly technical levels with regard to addressing environmental sustainability, which might be overlooked in HRBAs. A person might have the right to land, but if land is not managed in a sustainable and productive way – including technical interventions such as soil and water conservation – then this right might not translate into a positive livelihood outcome.

Box 5 looks at a set of issues to be included in analysing concrete contexts when combining aspects of both approaches.

Box 5: Rights and livelihood analysis

How do people perceive their rights? (rights awareness, local perception of rights and responsibilities)

Do people have the resources and capacity to claim their rights? (who controls which assets? are human capacities and financial and physical assets sufficient to allow people access to or demand their rights? what is the social positioning of individuals? who has power and authority? etc.)

What provisions exists for recognising people's rights? (legal/constitutional rights, customary rights)

Do institutions/organisations support people's efforts to claim their rights? (are basic human rights recognised? what institutions/organisations exist to provide for/enforce rights? do all have equal rights to formal justice and legal systems? is political power exercised fairly? how efficient and effective are local service providers? are government organisations honest, efficient, effective and accessible?)

What policies exist to support rights? (what is the content of these policies? how do they translate to practice?)

How is policy made, and can people access or influence relevant policy-making processes? (what is the policy context and related power structures? what are policy narratives and biases? who are actors and their networks influencing policy?)

Source: Adapted form Pasteur & Shankland (2002).

Combining aspects from both the SLA and the HRBA can mean broadening the SLA to look at power systems and, as a result, address political sustainability through participation and empowerment. At the same time, the SLA helps the HRBA to focus on specific rights and on individual (and sometimes non-formal) contextual settings.

4.2. The operational level/project design

a) Overall/general

There is no 'one-size fits all' approach to combining SLAs and HRBAs at the operational level: it depends on the scope of the intervention and the stakeholders involved. In practical terms, combining the approaches can happen at several levels (Pasteur & Shankland, 2002):

- Reducing **vulnerability**: Vulnerability contexts often result from a lack of rights (e.g. labour rights, land rights, rights to access common pool resources). Some vulnerabilities can be identified through a rights lens: e.g. freedom from forced labour or freedom from domestic violence. Vulnerability is a result not only of risks but also of deep-rooted social structures, such as those linked to gender, class, ethnicity or religion.

- Increasing **assets**: This encompasses a focus both on people's rights to particular assets and on the way different kinds of assets can serve as resources for claiming rights (e.g. human capital in the form of skills and knowledge can be decisive for claiming rights).

- Changing **policies, institutions, organisations and processes**: Accessing rights or demanding their fulfilment implies participation in processes of interaction and negotiation with formal and informal state and non-state institutions and organisations.

b) Entry points

Seeking to strengthen the livelihoods and rights of poor people will need analysis of specific context to identify the most appropriate entry points. Depending on circumstances it would be more appropriate to either employ a livelihoods or a rights-based analysis. The two approaches exhibit specific strength in identifying entry points at different levels: Whereas the SLA is stronger at the micro-level focusing on poor people's assets and capabilities shaping their strategies to react to risks and opportunities in a given context, HRBAs focus stronger on national and policy levels by addressing both capacities of right-holders and obligations of duty-bearers. Depending on the scope of interventions and the stakeholders involved, entry points might be global and regional (e.g. ensuring that trade negotiations or environmental treaties do not undermine livelihood options of the poor), deal with national policy dialogue (contributing both to macro policy dialogue in economic, social, political and environmental spheres, and to sector policy dialogue) or national and sub-national programme and project support (e.g. strengthening the public sector to deliver services, strengthening civil society, supporting the rural poor in using natural resources in a sustainable manner, etc.) (Moser & Norton, 2001).

c) Channels

People can use different channels to pursue claims and contest rights. These can relate to the political system, the legal system, policy channels, administrative channels, social channels or private sector channels (Moser & Norton, 2001). Claims can be made around a diversity of rights associated with livelihoods and related assets: these may include claiming access to common pool resources or agricultural land (natural capital), access to credit (financial capital), or access to education and training (human capital). From a SLA perspective, it depends principally on people's social, political and financial capital if and how they can make claims.

d) Monitoring and evaluation

The clear focus on outputs and outcomes in SLAs can help in designing baselines and benchmarks to be used in later stages for impact monitoring. In impact assessment, SLAs can help identify whether project interventions have contributed to strengthening the assets of the poor. If baseline data collection has been carried out separately for different social groups, monitoring impacts can shed light on whether or not the poor (or specific target groups) have been reached or whether better-off individuals and households benefited. Baseline data collection using an SLA approach can also help in identifying conflicting outcomes and trade-offs between possible interventions.

Similarly, a HRBA provides a framework for monitoring development interventions, especially in terms of processes, but also in terms of outputs and outcomes. The core principles of HRBAs, i.e. accountability, participation and non-discrimination, can be used as a basic framework for deriving more specific criteria and indicators. These can be used to monitor changes related to rights holders claiming their rights as well as duty bearers being held to account.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Moving towards a combined livelihood and rights-based approach implies a shift at both the conceptual and the operational level in view of poverty reduction. It requires broadening the focus of the **context analysis** while identifying and planning development interventions. Of specific importance is incorporating issues of social differentiation and inequalities according to gender, class, caste, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. It is also key to look at power relations, whether visible, hidden or invisible, at various levels (local, national, international), which hinder people from achieving sustainable livelihood outcomes.

Design of interventions might become more complex, as deep-rooted social structures, legal frameworks or national policies need to be addressed if these are identified as constraining poor people's livelihoods. This can imply a shift for agencies, which so far have focused – and gained specific competencies – on local communities towards working beyond communities and localised societies at higher administrative levels, in order to address the underlying root causes of poverty, livelihood insecurity and vulnerability of marginalised people.

This may have consequences for **approaches to development**. When looking at improving livelihoods at local level, approaches used to be more of a project or programme nature. The combined SLA/HRBA approach may entail a stronger orientation towards policy dialogue at national or even international level. In practical terms this allows for closer linkages between the micro-level (e.g.

identifying determinants of poverty such as denied access to assets) with the macro-level (e.g. engaging in policy dialogue to formulate policies that enable those excluded from assets to claim assets through legal channels).

It may also influences approaches to **outcome monitoring**, as the focus shifts from monitoring direct impacts of interventions on livelihood outcomes at individual or household levels towards analysing whether or not interventions have led to i) empowering rights holders in claiming their rights to assets and entitlements that make their livelihoods sustainable and contribute to alleviating poverty; ii) strengthened capacity of duty bearers at multiple levels to meet their obligations; and iii) changes in policies, institutions, organisations and processes that strengthen and empower actors.

Combining sustainable livelihood and rights-based approaches (see also Annex 1) allows a specific focus on the root causes of poverty. Addressing these, achieving rights standards and having a positive influence on changing norms and values, structures, policy and practice can be seen as a way to broadening the possible areas of intervention at multiple levels for development agencies, which hopefully leads to sustained change.

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Annex 1: CARE's Household Livelihood Security Approach

The Household Livelihood Security (HLS) approach has become CARE's basic framework for programme analysis, design, monitoring and evaluation. HLS grew out of a food security perspective, but is based on the observation that food is only one important basic need among several. Recognising the multi-dimensionality and complex nature of poverty, the HLS approach provides a framework to analyse and understand the determinants of poverty and people's mechanisms for dealing with it.

Since CARE introduced the HLS framework, its basic concept has been evolving towards incorporating rights-based approaches (RBA). CARE has found it essential to include a rights-based lens through which to develop new strategies for reaching its vision and mission - bringing lasting change to individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world by (i) strengthening people's ability to help themselves, (ii) providing economic opportunity, (iii) delivering relief in emergencies, (iv) influencing policy decisions at all levels, and (v) addressing discrimination in all its forms. CARE specifically points out that the RBA does not replace the HLS. The combination of a Rights Based Approach and the HLS framework is termed "a rights-based approach to Household Livelihood Security".

CARE recognised that strengthening rights aspects in the HLS required a more systematic poverty analysis in order to address its root causes. CARE has therefore started to focus more on analysing policy level issues and is increasingly working at levels beyond the community. It was recognised that applying a rights-based approach to HLS requires CARE staff to focus on improving not only people's conditions (needs) but also their social positions (rights), and to broaden the capacity to analyse household vulnerability related to levels of marginalisation. A rights-based approach to sustainable livelihood security requires the analysis of rights and responsibilities, as well as the design of interventions that have an impact on people whose rights are being violated as well as on improving their capacity to exercise their obligations as citizens. CARE also realised that its Country Offices will need to make new strategic alliances, since rights realisation is not something that CARE will be able to achieve on its own.

The Figure below presents how a causal analysis of food / livelihood insecurity can be linked to an analysis of rights and responsibility – both in terms of who is responsible for causing the livelihood insecurity as well as who is responsible for addressing it and where CARE could play a role in influencing the situation.
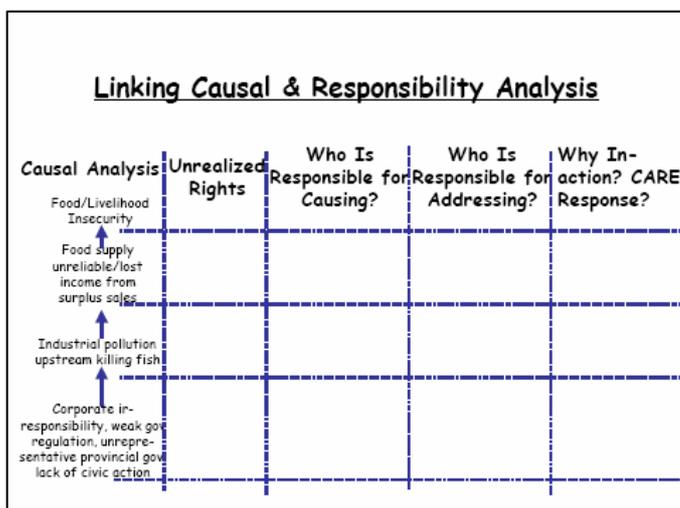
Source: CARE (2002)

One of the key strengths of integrating rights-based approaches to HLS has been identified by CARE as that it requires disaggregating data collection and poverty analysis by ethnic group, gender, economic status, social strata, age, etc. in order to analyse differences in (i) the division of labour within the family and the community, (ii) access to goods and services, (iii) control over resources, (iv) the exercise of rights and obligations, (v) the accumulation of capital (physical, natural, economic, human, social, political), (vi) vulnerability and marginalisation issues, and (vii) the distribution of political and economic power. In doing so, it addresses on of the criticisms raised against early versions of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework – its shortcoming of explicitly addressing differentiation and power relations within societies.

CARE points out that livelihood assessments based on the HLS are holistic and can easily be expanded to incorporate a comprehensive relational analysis of social positions and marginalisation, the influence of power in the local context, and the degree of human rights realisation. Assessments can thus point towards those basic conditions that prevent people from living in dignity, such as limited personal security, limited freedom of movement and poor participation in public affairs. This analysis of factors affecting livelihood security conditions was considered as enabling CARE staff to better understand the socio-political obstacles facing communities and the inter-relationships among different, and possibly competing, rights and obligations.

The rights-based HLS assessment was seen necessary to take into consideration the various formal and in-formal institutions that influence rights realisation. Institutional mapping was systematically integrated to identify how responsible actors or institutions advance or impede rights. This also involves understanding local perceptions of the legitimacy and values of local institutions.

With respect to designing interventions, CARE sees a rights-based approach to allow a specific focus on root causes of poverty: The HLSA attempts to determine what, if any, rights are not being met, the parties not exercising their rights and obligations, and the actions that can be taken (by level of responsibility) to promote rights realisation. It is further stressed that no fundamental driver of poverty and livelihood insecurity should automatically be assumed to be too political, sensitive or complex to be addressed. Addressing the root causes of poverty and achieving rights standards is seen as a way of broadening the menu of responses within CARE programmes. This also implies that CARE will intervene at multiple levels.

There remain a number of questions about the conceptual and practical application of explicit rights based approaches such as the one applied by CARE. An interagency group compared rights based and non-rights based programmes to assess their impact on the multidimensional experience of poverty and the realisation of MDGs. Preliminary findings showed that (i) there is a lack of adequate baseline data across all projects to assess impacts and to track the process of rights interventions; (ii) both rights based and non-rights based approaches may have significant impacts on people's lives, including generating increases in assets, decreases in vulnerability, and improvements in human security. However, rights based programmes appear more likely to lead to sustained change, as they have greater impact on norms and values, structures, policy and practice.

Source: CARE (2002, 2006).

A full version of the CARE "Household Livelihood Security Assessment: A Toolkit for Practitioners" (2002) can be found at

http://www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/CRA/HLSA2002_meth.pdf