

## Understanding Livelihood Framework:

### With special reference to DFID Tool

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#### Abstract

Sustainable Livelihood Framework is an important analytical tool for research in Social Science. It helps the researcher to monitor and evaluate livelihood condition of people. We find the idea about Livelihood in Robert Chamber's writings. Chamber developed the idea of "Sustainable Livelihoods". The main goal of his research was to enhance the efficiency of development cooperation. Robert Chamber's idea gave rise to Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA). The British Department for International Development (DFID) integrated the Approach in its program for development co-operation.(DSG:Z-2002).This paper seeks to understand the working principles of Sustainable Livelihood Framework given by DFID.

**Keywords:** *Livelihood, Sustainable Livelihood, SLA, SLF, DFID.*

#### An Overview

Dictionary meaning of livelihood is 'means of living, an income' (Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary, fifth edition). Livelihood means a person's capacity to buy – food, shelter, and cloth .In 1992, Robert Chamber and Gordon Conway have given the following definition of livelihood, as- "A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for means of living; a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base." The Sustainability aspect has become more important, over the years.

The concept of sustainable livelihood (SL) goes beyond the conventional definition of livelihood. The conventional definitions of livelihood was narrow in a sense that they focused only on certain aspects of poverty such as low income and did not consider other vital aspects of poverty such as vulnerability and social exclusion. But sustainable livelihood includes various factors and processes. These factors either

constrain or enhance poor people's ability to make a living in economically, ecologically and socially sustainable manner (Anand,2013).

### **Objective of the study**

The present paper attempts to trace the concept of sustainable livelihood Framework, and how it has been developed as a tool of analysis for transforming the lives of poor people by DFID. It is basically a review paper.

### **Importance of the study:**

The understanding of poverty, and the factors that perpetuate poverty has increased over a period of time. The effect is felt in qualitative as well as quantitative aspects. In other words, now we have better inputs, both contextually as well as empirically to analyses Poverty. Economists study poverty from a theoretical angle, sociologists focus on the societal aspects, Planners and policy makers have set targets to achieve. Aid giving agencies like OXFAM, CARE, DFID focus on the transformative aspect. They need an analytical framework, which helps them to channelize the aid and a tool whereby they can monitor the effectivity of their efforts. There are some finer differences in the approach of different organizations. The present paper focuses on understanding SLF approach developed by DFID, highlighting its usefulness as a tool to comprehend the multidimensionality of poverty.

### **A. About Sustainable Livelihood Approach**

'Sustainable livelihood' is a people-centred approach to development. Based on the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report and the first UNDP Human Development Report of 1990 ,the concept of sustainable livelihood was developed by research institutions including the Institute of Development Studies of the University of Sussex and the Overseas Development Institute in the United Kingdom; NGOs such as CARE and OXFAM; and Development Organizations including DFID and UNDP. (Anand, 2013)

### **Core concepts of SLA :**

1. It is people-centered and not focused on just resource utilization.
2. It has holistic approach, in that sense, it is multi dimensional.
3. It is dynamic in the sense that it is flexible, and it sets long term goals.
4. It builds strength of the Stakeholders. It focuses on the stakeholders as the main actors.
5. It builds Macro-Micro links. And emphasizes on the linkages among different parameters.
6. It emphasizes on sustainability of the livelihood. (Kolmair, Gamper, Juli, 2002)

Thus, Livelihood framework is described as a versatile tool in Planning and Management, a multidimensional approach used as a framework to eliminate poverty.

## **B. Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF)**

The SLF forms the core of sustainable livelihood approach and serves as an instrument for the investigation of poor people's livelihoods. Like all models, the SLF is a simplified tool .It does not represent the full diversity and richness of livelihood. To understand its diversity and richness qualitative and participatory analysis at the local level is necessary. (Development Study Group :Zurich, 2002)

According to Alwang, Siegel and Jorgenson(2001), the sustainable livelihood framework is influenced by the pioneering work of Economist Amartya Sen. The concept of "Entitlement" developed by Sen sets the foundation for asset-based analysis focused on Livelihoods.

SLF is an important tool which gives important insight into practicality of different dimensions of livelihood. It has been applied in social research to assess the livelihood condition of people or to know about livelihood generation activities.(Dasgupta). SLF as a tool helps us analyze the existing s living conditions of the people. The holistic character of the tool helps us permeate deeper into the factors perpetuating poverty and hence SLF emerges as an important tool to find long lasting solution to eradicate mass poverty.

SLF advocated a two way approach ---

- (a) It focuses on identifying how policies affect livelihood
- (b) It emphasizes on how a better understanding of livelihood can help improve policy-making and implementation. (Bhuyan, 2011).

Thus, it offers us an insight into the finer nuances of situations perpetuating poverty. According to social scientists, both simple measures as well as more detailed measures(in-depth analysis) are required for Sustainable Livelihood analysis. The uses of the SLF are diverse and flexible. It can be adoptable to many settings, may be urban as well as rural.

Different development organizations use different livelihood frameworks to simplify the complexity of livelihood analysis. They seek to understand the needs of the people and how these needs are fulfilled in order to improve their livelihood. CARE's model centres round household livelihood strategy whereas the DFID gives importance to capital assets on livelihood and it lays emphasis on social, Economic, Environmental and institutional sustainability and it gives stress on Micro- Macro links. UNDP explicitly focuses on the importance of technology as a means to help people rise out of poverty (DFID, CARE & UNDP). (Bhattachargee, 2009)

### **Importance of SLF:**

"The sustainable livelihoods framework presents the main factors that affect people's livelihoods, and typical relationship between them. It can be used in both planning new development activities and assessing the contribution to sustainability made by existing activities."(DFID Guidance Sheet).

It is an important tool for researcher to make study on livelihoods. Research may be based on the whole tool or part of it also gives insight to the researchers about the livelihood conditions of people, may be at local level or at regional level of a country.

Diagrammatic presentation of DFID Model (SLF) is given below:

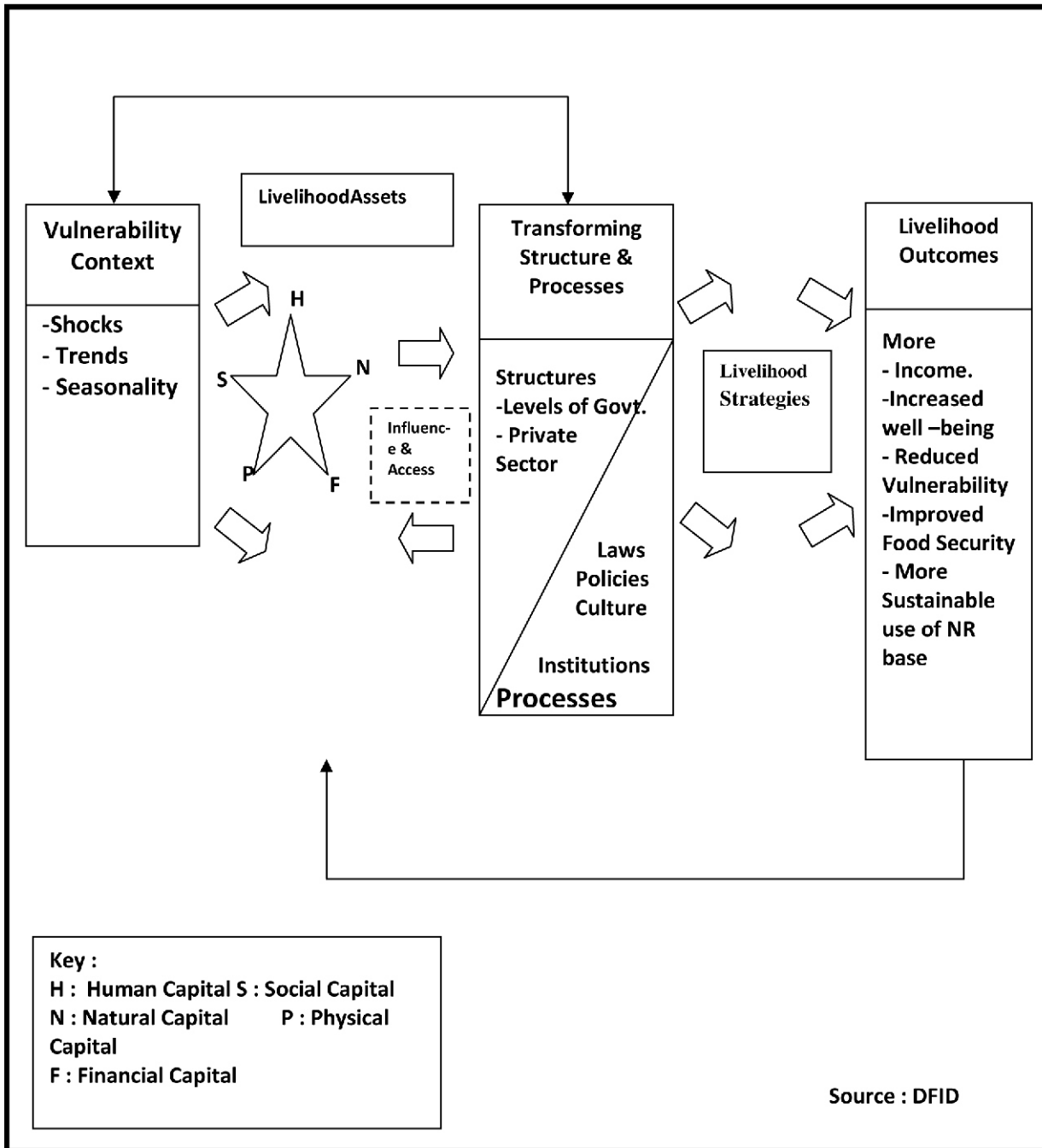


Figure 1 : The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF), The DFID Tool

In the following, the core ideas represented in the SLF(DFID Model) are explained and defined in the way they should be understood in this context.

### **Five important aspects of the DFID model**

#### **A. Vulnerability Context**

According to World Bank “Vulnerability is defined as the probability of a decline in wellbeing below a specific benchmark.”

It comprises :-

- Trends (Demographic trends, resource trends, trends in governance).
- Shocks (Human, live stocks or crop health shocks like illness and death, Natural calamities like floods, drought, high wind or earthquakes, economic shocks like unemployment, resettlement, and harvest failure etc.)
- Conflicts in form of National or International wars.
- Seasonality (i.e. Seasonality of prices, products or employment opportunities)

#### **B. Livelihood Assets**

According to Bebbington (1999), the livelihood approach is concerned with people. So an accurate and realistic understanding of peoples strengths (here called ‘assets’ or ‘capital’) is crucial to analyze and it is difficult to measure their endeavour to convert their assets into positive livelihood outcomes. (DSG:Z-2002)

DFID (2001) has identified five livelihood assets which are important for smooth sustainable life of people. These are – (i) Human Capital, (ii) Physical Capital, (iii) Financial Capital, (iv) Social Capital, (v) Natural Capital.

**Human Capital:** Skills, knowledge, health and ability to work.

**Social Capital :** Social resources ( networks, social claims, social relations, affiliations, associations)

**Natural Capital :** Natural resources such as – land, soil, water, forest and fisheries.

**Physical Capital:** Basic infrastructure such as – roads, water and sanitation, schools, and producer goods; including tools, livestock and equipments.

**Financial Capital :** Financial resources including savings, credit and income from employment, trade and remittances.

#### **C. Transforming Structure and Processes:**

Different Institutions, organizations, policies and legislation can shape livelihoods of a locality/ region by Transforming its Structures and Processes.

**Structure** – can be described as the hardware (private and public organizations) that set and implement policy and legislation, deliver services, purchase, trade and perform all manner of other functions that affect livelihoods. (DFID, 2000).

**Processes** : are - policies, legislation and institutions, culture and power relations. Processes can Transform livelihoods. (DFID, 2000).

#### **D. Livelihood Strategies:**

There are three broad clusters of livelihood Strategies. These are: agricultural intensification/ extensification, livelihood diversification and migration. (Scoones)

#### **E. Livelihood Outcome:**

Livelihood outcomes are more income (e.g. cash), increased well-being (non-material goods, like self – esteem, health status, access to services, sense of inclusion) reduced vulnerability (e.g. better resilience through increase in asset status), improved food security (e.g. increase in financial capital in order to buy food) and a more sustainable use of natural resources. Outcomes give the ultimate result/output within the livelihood framework. (DSG:Z-2002)

#### **Conclusion**

DFID's aim is to effectively challenge the situation perpetuating poverty, and in providing a contextual framework to banish poverty from the underdeveloped countries of the world. Poor are poor not just because they have low income, but many other conditions, like bad health, lack of access to loans, inability to withstand a drought or a famine and many more. SLF recognizes all these linkages, and inter-linkages. We can say that in this sense, the SLF is a more sophisticated tool for analysis than, the concept of 'Poverty line', or even Physical Quality of Life (PQL).

Different studies made by Ellis(2000), Calow(2001), Ashley(2000) on livelihood in Tanzania, Ethiopia and Kenya respectively were made with the help of SLF. (DSG:Z-2002). In India, Bangladesh, Nepal and some other developing countries too different projects are going on which adopt DFID Framework for livelihood analysis. Livelihood analysis requires enormous time, effort and financial resources on the part of the Researchers.(DSG:Z-2002). And herein lies the importance of a tool, and as a tool SLF is comprehensive, aiding the research work. However, DFID is not just content with developing the tool of SLF as a tool of analysis, but channelizes its aid, based on the analysis using this tool. In this context, one can say that it has a 'transforming' angle also. The tool is not just theoretical, it has practical dimension of equal significance.

Poverty is a complex problem and eradication of poverty is an even more complex process. The SLF model developed by DFID takes household as a basic unit, and to that extent, the inequality that exist within the household tend to get overlooked. However, the worksheets on SLF handle the gender element very sensitively.

SLF(DFID) takes more holistic view of poverty, considering multiple resources beyond income levels and productivity. The SLF (DFID) is considered to be unique as it includes environmental sustainability as a consideration of relevance to poverty (ATHA)

At present time Sustainable Livelihood is gaining importance as the world is moving to achieve 'Sustainable Development Goal' set by the United Nations. In this context SLF appears to be an important tool to realize the Sustainable Development Goal set by the United Nations to really *Transform Our World* from poverty-ridden to poverty-free. This calls for universal participation of people, institutions and Governments.

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